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By Nathaniel S. Shaler

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FROM OLD FIELDS

FROM OLD FIELDS

Poems of the Civil War

BY

NATHANIEL SOUTHGATE SHALER

LATE PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY
AND DEAN OF LAWRENCE SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL

> "For out of olde feldes, as men seith,
> Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere"
> CHAUCER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN & COMPANY
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1906

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Published November 1906

TO THE PEOPLE OF
KENTUCKY
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

In dedicating this book to the people of Kentucky, I do what would have pleased Mr. Shaler, for although he was in close sympathy with his adopted Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and at all times an earnest champion of its enlightenment and its noble institutions, yet when it was a question of elemental emotion, of the deeper ideals of life, he found himself back in the favoured land of his birth. Claiming the whole world as his own by divine right of sympathy, he professed to be at home everywhere: nevertheless, his associations with his native State, mellowed and made picturesque by hereditary traditions, were the surest and most enduring of his possessions, and as time wore on his spirit seemed to dwell there with strange peace and contentment. In that youthful, gallant, and victorious world — the world that gave to the Confederacy "The Orphan Brigade," whose prowess is celebrated in these pages — he liked to lose his personality in the general tendencies and accomplishments of its people. Imaginatively capable both of their defects and their virtues, he was in reality the incarnation of their highest type of gentleman, — the type to which Washington, Lee, Thomas, Farragut, and many others belonged, dutiful, just, dignified, and courageous men, equal to all social demands, and able to win inspiration from any and every call to duty.

He ascribed to Kentuckians a certain fine negligence and prodigality of nature common to large-hearted men who have faith in themselves and in the inexhaustible riches of the world. He especially approved the state of mind which made solicitude and excessive prudence the accessories and not the mainsprings of life. Above all, he valued in them the courage to be themselves, untrammeled by conventions or by undue concern for personal interests. It was these qualities which endeared his people to him.

A few evenings before sending to press the poems contained in this volume, my husband brought them to me to read once more. When I had finished, struck with the fact that some of his heroes were Confederates, I exclaimed: "What does this mean — and you an old Federal officer!" Laying down his long-stemmed pipe, for a moment he silently gazed into the fire. Then lifting his head, his usual alert glance dimmed with emotion, "Well," he said, "those brave lads were my companions in youth, and that's why, I suppose, they 've claimed the right to be where I 've put them — among my chosen men."

The end came before Mr. Shaler was able to correct or revise the proof of these poems; for this service I am greatly indebted to his old friend and well-loved pupil, Mr. William R. Thayer.

SOPHIA P. SHALER.

August 20, 1906.

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FROM OLD FIELDS

PROLOGUE

WHAT should we do with ancient deeds and days
That in the ancient way go to the deep
Straight as a plummet till they find their place
In its enduring silence? Leave them slip
From light to dark, and watch the tiny whirl
Upon the swift glassed ocean till there comes
Another whirling, token of where sinks
Again brave man or deed? Nay, so the brutes
In the brute time, atom and molecule
Planets and suns trooped from the dark to dark;
So too their children in the beasts and birds
Went unremembered out of light and life
Leaving of chaunting soul and lion's heart
Naught but their progeny to brave and sing
Their little while in air and be forgot.
It is the part of man to treasure men
And set their splendours in the heaven's vault,
Until those stars shall make us endless day
To banish villain night. 'T is his to help
The Architect in shaping out of dust
His temple that uplifts within the void
To be the habitation of the all
That wins His splendour; till there be no more
Of death that knows but dust.
                                        So let us on

Upon this goodly work, — shape as we may
Its deep foundations from our brother's deeds
Built to uphold His fane, — set in its walls
Imperishable gems they wrought from dust,
And grace it with all grace of memory, —
Turn every stone they wrought and seek the face
That shines the fairest in the glint of sun, —
Care even for the shards they cast away
So that they bear the touch of their dear hands, —
Let to the plummet's deep alone the shames,
Those ugly prints on earth trod by the feet
That strove unknowing upward. Thus we may
Be helpers of the Master.

NEAR THE FRONT

A STREET in country town at midnight time:
Above, the harvest moon; below, the earth
War-stricken, desolate. On either side
Is utter ruin; here, by flame that left
But whitened remnants, — there, yet sorrier
In shops and dwellings where the doors stand wide
And trampled goods tell plain that plunderers
Have ravaged where men stored. Along this street
Is laid a hard-marched column by its arms:
Close-packed upon the sidewalks, with the feet
In dusty gutters and each side the way
Crammed close as herring in a box; they sleep
With breasts to sky or earth: shaped as they 'll lie
Within the trenches ere the shovelers
Have done their part. Upon the unblocked road,
Six paces wide, pass on the endless trains
Of laden wagons, guns, and cavalry
To hard-pressed front: and a like ceaseless line
Of ambulances bearing to the rear
Their loads of misery. The creaking wheels
Crunch on the loosened stones two feet away
From outer lines of heads, and send the dust
Upon their senseless eyes. The riders sway
Nigh out their saddles and the horses lean
One 'gainst the other as they stumble on,

For they, too, slumber — yea, this world 's asleep,
Save from each ambulance the wounded tell
They know their torment. There one pleads for drink —
Poor chap, his bandage 's loosened and he thirsts
Because his life flows out. He 'll soon be still:
His cry is but a quaver; he 'll soon slake
Thirst at the eternal spring. See, there goes
A woman treading softly through the host,
Scanning the faces upturned to the sky
With eager stealth. Swift glance and then swift on
Until she 's out of sight.

THE MARKSMAN'S WORK

The silent lines
Are set against each other in the pause
That comes before the battle; watching near
The chance of stroke and parry. Waiting still
For some last vantage of new men, or guns,
Or for belated scouts who search the point
Where well-aimed blow may tell. It is a time
When soul is tense as bowstring with its shaft
Down to the head: when all the leaders watch
As cats before the pounce.
In front of us
Are fields whereon for half a mile there is
No note of what 's to come. The sheep feed there,
As by the shambles they are wont to crop
What good earth sends of nurture. But away
Nigh thousand yards beyond our outer force,
Are foemen's pickets: on their line a house,
The homestead of these fields, and by its side,
Beneath an orchard's shade, a battery
Where men lie by their guns, while right and left
Stretches the dun line of their waiting host.
Upon the housetop, seated on the crest,
There sits a soldier, bending o'er a board,

Making a sketch-map of our front. We see
With the unaided eye no more than this,
For in that distance man is but a mite —
Mere fleck 'gainst earth or sky. Yet with the glass
We change him to near neighbour. So we find
He is an officer, fair-shaped and young,
Who 's deftly at his task. Now he looks up,
And with hand-shaded eyes he scans our front:
Then with his pencil turns them to his sketch.
It is a pretty sight, as innocent
As the sheep cropping in the quiet field,
And yet he knows 't is venture, hardiest
A man may make in war, and we know well
He is a brave man whom we needs must slay
So swift we can.
                    Quick the commander calls —
"Here, Captain, have a gun with your best squad
And knock that fellow off."
                    "It shall be done.
But you should see that close beside that house
They have a battery, and to my gun
They 're sure to send an answer from their own;
And then the dance begins."
                    "We don't want that,
Yet we must stop that rascal."
                    "Let me call
A fellow from the regiment that serves
As my support. He is the crackest shot

From Minnesota: used to just such work
In potting redskins."
"Have him for a try —
Nine hundred yards — I 'll bet a hat he 'll miss,
Yet it is worth the trying, for the ball
May scare the villain off."
Up comes the man,
A lank and grizzled fellow, with the eye,
Blue-grey and strangely steadfast, of the sort
Who have the slaying habit. "Can you hit
That chap upon the housetop?"
"Guess I can,
It is a long shot, but there ain't no wind."
Slowly he loads his rifle; then he goes
Down to a fence; looks long and silently
As if he paced the distance in his mind:
Now lies upon his belly; finds a rest
To hold his piece that suits him, by a post.
We see him ready, and with glass to eyes
A score watch for the end. There sits the youth,
The picture of an artist at his task,
Outgoing to the world and bringing back
Share of its wealth. How happy he seems there
In the new morning! *Crack!* the rifle rings:
We hold breath for an instant. There he goes
Backward behind the ridgepole, while his sketch
Flits down the roof towards us. As the face
Slips out of sight, we see the startled look

That comes upon it when the man knows death.
We close our glasses; not a word is said;
The marksman stalks away; he does not look
Into our eyes, but straightway on: and we
Keep eyes from others' faces and seek out
Some trifling thing to do.

THE HALTED BATTLE

THEY are hard at it; veteran brigades
Who 've chased each other up and down the land
Till one has turned at bay. Near-by are groups
Of men who hold the horses nose to nose,
A dozen in a bunch, where they find place
To 'scape the scorching fire; and there the lines:
Not as you see them pictured in fair rows
Like garden plants, but scattered creeping men
By ones and twos and threes that slip right on,
Kneeling to shoot, running to win their way,
And sometimes toppling when the way is lost
For this world's faring. There upon the hills
Are set the batteries, they too most unlike
The artist's business — each with six great guns,
As neatly lined as books upon a shelf,
With dancing dolls about them. They 're well hid,
You never see a muzzle or a man,
But know them by their shout, the puffs of smoke,
The screech of shrapnel and the cloud in air
That sends its leaden hail. Ay, here is war,
With its infernal splendour naught can quell
Until the fire 's flamed out. All earth's priests
With book and candle could not exorcise
That demon from this field.
                                        But now there comes

The mightier, a maid upon a horse.
A whiff of wind and there she is amidst
The plump of shot and shell. She goes straight on,
As if 't was custom with her thus to ride
Into the gates of Hell. With a "Good Lord!"
And else of expletive, the leader calls
The bugler to sound truce, lifts the white flag
So that his brethren other side of field
In wonder halt their fire. Sends forth an aid
With handkerchief on sabre to explain
A woman owns the field, that till she 's off,
The battle needs be. Then he seeks the lass:
The damsel undisturbed is chatting on
With those beside her, very much at ease,
As if this old world were so very good
That Satan could not mar it. Now he says,
"Well, little woman, what has brought you here?
This is no place for you."
"I 'm going to my ma's;
I 've been a-visiting, 't is my way home."
"Yes, yes, but don't you see we 've business
With other fellows, and you will get hurt;
So go back to your friends and stay with them
Until we 've done our job."
"I told you, sir,
I 'm going to my ma's. What I 've to do
Is most important, so you 'll have to wait
Till I get by." The general mops his face,
Sputters a bit in undertones, then laughs,

Rocking to saddlebow. Now he rides on,
The damsel by his side, upon the way.
First through his own troops, who rise up and cheer,—
A shout with sorrow in it, for the lass
Brings back the memory of far-off homes,
Of sisters and of sweethearts; now 'cross fields
That were debated, to the foeman's lines
For a like greeting. Most courteously
He hands her to his foeman. "This dear girl
Is for her ma's; 't will need full half an hour
Before she 's out of range; let our flag stay
Until that time is up." The other says:
"Would it could stay for good: it will be hard
To go straight back to Hell in half an hour."

THE MASTER'S RAGE

A SOLDIER'S STORY

Pap Thomas did n't talk much with his tongue,
But when it came to doing, then oh, my!
He was an orator to lift your hair.
He and their Stonewall Jackson had the trick
Of saying nothing till their job was done,
And nothing afterwards. Virginians
Are mighty queer. The half of them all gab,
The other half whack hard and march right on
To find the next chance. So it was with Pap.
At first we thought him dumb, but we soon learned
The way he talked. You must remember how
He whooped old Hood right off of Nashville field
So fast and far, that Old Nick never found
Where his headquarters were. He did that job
In Quaker-meeting way: kept mighty still
Until the Lord was ready: then went on
As if he owned the sky. I 'll tell you now
A story that ain't printed, but it shows
The way he preached.
                                        We were a scurvy lot
Of raw recruits; both men and officers
Were mostly in for Hell. The decent chaps
Were scared of those who warn't. Then came old Pap.

At first we grinned and wondered what he 'd do,
And planned our darndest just to find it out.
We found it pretty quick. He did n't stop
For grand review, as all the others did
When they came for a try. He rode straight down
The halted column: so we could n't work
The rackets we had rigged, and when we tried
To get up something as he passed, his eyes
Went right straight through us and we felt ashamed,
And mad because we did. Now when he came
To where our company stood, we 'd scattered out
To raid a little farm. Our captain first —
He was a cuss. He led us in such games,
But when we 'd business he 'd the belly-ache.
He 'd set the house afire, and now came out
With both arms full of plunder, — women's clothes,
A mantel-clock, et cet'ra, — looking round
To find the stolen wagon where he kept
The things he ragged for shipment. Then Pap comes
With all his staff; reined up and took it in, —
The burning house, the looting, and our Cap
With his mule-load of stealings. With a jump
He 's off his horse and square before the cuss,
Whose shoes seemed stuck to ground.
Then slowly Pap relieved him of his load,
Set down the clock and laid the women's clothes
Right careful on the grass. We fellows thought
Now we 'd the chance to play at horse with him,
So we began to holler: then stopped off

At what was doing. Silent still, old Pap
Took out the cuss's sword, and with a whack
Upon the door-stone made it smithereens;
Pulled off his uniform and left him there
Stark naked in the cold. When Pap was done,
Without a word he climbed back on his horse
And rode on down the line. My, we were still
Who saw it all, and those who did n't knew
Somehow or other of it — knew with us
That we had come bang up against the Lord
And must behave as men. As for the Cap —
We emptied out his wagon for the folks
Who owned the farm and chucked him naked in.
He squealed Pap had no right to strip him bare.
I reckon that is so. Reg'lations say
Nothing about it: Uncle Moses, too,
Don't take it up. But when you find Old Nick
Inside a chap, I reckon that you have
A right to whale him out, and need n't be
Too durned particular not to spoil the hide
When he has been let in. You bet there were
A lot of welts on Jew backs when He'd done
With cleaning out the temple.

THE BAD SAMARITAN

After the reapers, enter in the folk
Who glean from stubble what they may of corn, —
The bowed, the children, cripples of the fight
They 've waged with earth, and those who watch for morn
When they may find their battle. They are done, —
For two-score years, the days when o'er our fields
Death led his train of sturdy harvesters,
Whose sickles swept them bare: but to our day
The gleaners heap their sheaves of noble deeds
The histories know not; deeds that shine as stars
On swift way to the dark — told once and then
Unto forgetfulness. One of these tales
May be as sample, showing how there lies
Wealth in the nooks and crannies of this land;
Vast store of valour, faith of man to man;
Trust in the living God.
                                        In Washington,
I came upon a friend, a congressman,
Sometime a Rebel: ever faithful man
To what he saw of duty. In his youth
He was a shapely giant, but was shorn
Of right leg at the hip and left to fight
Life's battle with his crutches. When I came
Into his room 't was dark. To welcome me
He sought to light the gas in chandelier.

It was high placed, so that he needed stretch
His six foot six on tiptoe. Twice he fell
Before the task was done. I gave no help,
For well I knew he'd smite me with his crutch
Before he'd have it. When my Hercules
Had done the job, he turned to me and said,
"I've found the man who saved me." He was full
Of the brave story I had often tried
To have him tell, and now he told it thus:—
"I was with Morgan in the second fight
We had at Cynthiana: we'd been driven
For two days' hard march; at the ford we turned
To be well beaten, hustled off the field:
In the last charge, I was hard hit and fell.
I knew I'd slipped from saddle; nothing more
Until I waked to find Samaritan,
A Federal soldier, caring for my wound.
He put a bandage and a twister on
As if he knew the trade. He gave me drink
From his canteen until I emptied it,
Then filled his own and mine and laid them down
Where I could reach them. While he cared for me
As though he were my brother,—so he was
Unto the Christ and me,—there came a wolf
On two legs with a gun across the field:
'Stand off,' he cried, 'and I will finish him.'
You know the brute, he's seldom seen, and goes
Hotly upon the trail."
"I know the kind.

He 's not for the despatches, nor for long
When true men are about."
"True man was there
And did it neatly. Then he stooped and asked
My name and number; wrote them on a slip
And pinned it to my breast. I knew well,
Though far and faintly, what that meant, and yet
'T was good to have it done, — so gently done —
Then came the assembly: calling for pursuit
Of what was left of my side. So he turned
To heed the call. Then back to me once more,
Stripped off his overcoat and wrapped me close.
I well remember that, and then no more
Until weeks after in the hospital.
The war was ended, and I was the last
Of all the lot. I had full time to think
Of what to do. There lay I like a hulk,
As helpless as when born; and there away
Far in the west, there were a wife and child
Waiting for me to help them in sore need.
We were as poor as churchmice. It looked bad,
And yet the memory of that dear chap
Who saved me on that field helped mightily,
For in a world where foe could be so true
There was sure chance of friends. They packed me off
As soon as it was safe, and shut the door
Of the last hospital. I 'd transportation home,
And there good welcome to grim poverty
From neighbors all dead poor. Their store was gone,

Save what they held in heart. I could not eat
Share of their scanty food — must work: but how?
I had four fifths of me, the other fifth
Was in the grave, and it takes all a man
To win him out of ruin. You can't guess
How I began! You 've seen sulky ploughs,
Those Yankee tricks with two wheels and two shares,
Shaped so you sit and drive and do the work
Of two old-fashioned rigs. There was my chance.
A man who 'd known my father helped me buy
The plough and horses. I was once more man
Facing the world. I broke tobacco fields, —
You know our staple, — ploughed the growing crops
For wage that seemed a fortune. In a year
I bought a farm, and within five was rich
For a one-legged ploughboy. I read law,
Slipped into politics, but kept my hold
Upon the land, and soon had wealth enough
For two stout legs to carry. All the while,
For twenty years, my mind ran on that man,
That enemy who 'd been my friend in need —
God's mercy when I lay beside my grave.
I never knew a day of happiness —
Mine have been mighty happy — but I thought
If he had passed me by 't would not have been.
I tried to find the fellow; got the rolls
Of the commands that were upon that field
And searched in vain to guess him. Sought the men
With whom he 'd served: but I had lost his shape —

When you 've been smote, you do not heed such things,
You only know the help. Offered reward —
To have a score of scoundrels at my heels —
He must be dead; so I would never know
His name or grave. And now at last he 's found.
Can you believe it? There in my own town.
A weary chap who 'd lost in life's hard fight —
Seedy and old. Full fifty times he 'd heard
The story from me: for 't was often told
In hope 't would bring the clue. He knew right well
That I would share with him what he had given
Upon that field, and yet the chap held still:
Grinned at the tale, and made as if he thought
It was a yarn such as a fellow spins
When crazy from a wound as I had been.
I 've had it out with him: he was right mad
That I had spotted him before he died,
For then he would n't mind."

THE WAY WITH MUTINEERS

If you need exploration of your soul,
Get a command of raw men — reprobates
From minstrel shows and jails. Tumble them in
Red-hot campaign to shape them on the march
And in the fight for service. You'll soon find
Their stuff and yours: a month of it will send
The plummet deeper than three-score and ten
Of ordered years where all earth's pleasant ways
Are trodden clear by custom, fenced by law
From the great wilderness. This story tells
The way of life you'll tread when your sore feet
Must stumble through such wild.
'T is just a week
Since, men and guns assembled, he, the youth
Who's dubbed their captain, set about his task
Of breaking them to harness. Yea, they chafe,
Those hard drawn thongs: it takes a bit of time
Before men's hides are calloused and their souls
Bend to the mastering. This is a day
When griefs have come to head, and half the force
Are ripe for mutiny. They need but rum,
A little touch of it, and they'll lash out.
They get it — Lord knows where — it seems to leak
Through sentries as through sieves, or it slips down
As manna from the sky. First comes a rush

Of half a score, the leaders, for his tent.
He meets them 'fore it, and with three steps back
And well-timed stroke of sword, sent flat on ears,
He fells the foremost three. The others hear
The swish and spank and see their comrades fall
To right and left and lie as though they 're dead:
That cools their rum. He calls the trusty guard —
The saving remnant — tithe of that sad lot;
The seeming dead are forth to calaboose:
They 'll come round in an hour, with nothing worse
Than two days' singing in their informed ears.
'Tis but a trifle, told because it tells
As ever does the sword when it is swung
By well-trained arm and wits that know its end's
To have the fellow down, and not to slay
In novice fashion. Here it further served,
For in his force there was a lieutenant
Of twice his years, old soldier from o'er sea
In search of fortune. Until now he 'd been
Mutinous himself in soul, to have a lad
New to the touch of arms set o'er his head.
When they came howling on he drew his sword
Ready to help, but waiting for command:
But in his eyes a look that told his chief
What hid behind it of expectancy.
In such swift times you see much — if at all;
The captain saw, and knew the fellow longed
To have it turn to profit, and it nerved
Soul for the strokes he sent. The man was true,

For all promotion 's dear. That business done,
He gave salute with sword and generously,
In way that told his nurture, said to him:
"I make my compliment, it was well done;
My Captain knows dot trick!" and they were friends
At touch of common trade. The youth had learned
"Dot trick" when but a stripling, at the hands
Of a great master, who taught him the sword.
Such things to be had surely need to grow
Into the waxing lad in his first teens,
So that the muscles do it in the need
Just as they serve the tiger's in his spring —
Mere wits would boggle it.
It 's now the time
For evening drill with guns. The men need have
Yet further lesson that their captain 's fit
To hold them to their work. He has just learned
From his first sergeant that he is contemned
By all the men because he cannot swear —
Their test of manly virtue. He loathes that —
But as it 's needful, he now harks him back
To certain memories of Skipper Small,
With whom he 'd sailed a short twelvemonth before —
Misnamed, for he was mighty in most things
That make a man, and wondrous in the way
In which he hurled profanity to sky:
No cheap and vulgar snarling, as you hear
From the land-lubber, but the roar of sea,
Of battling ships and storms. Those Spanish things

That cut your soul like knives; Italian
To scorch your kindred, mixed up with those psalms,
Imprecatories, with Semitic art to damn
For this world and the next, went in to make
What English lacked of Satan's litany.
It was a thing famed to the furthest seas,
And fitly, for in it you heard a soul
Contending with the deeps. It's well to say
That Small, ashore, was deacon; there his speech
Was very gentle, almost ladylike.
He roared but seldom, even on the seas;
But gods and men attended when he did.
A little conning, and that litany
Is ready for the service. All an hour
Those chaps in calaboose are in their minds:
Then once again the horse play and foul chaff.
He's waited for the moment; then lets forth
That sulphurous inundation. First they stare,
Then pale and gasp. Poor things, they'd dreamed they swore!
Ten minutes of the blast and they are tamed.
He never swore again — there was no need,
For now they're sure that though he is a boy,
That boy's been deep in Hell. So he has right
To be their over-lord.
Yet one more scene,
The worst in all these acts, and it is done,
This task of breaking in. The captain finds
Near by his camp, at dusk, one of his men,

Macdonald by his name, with shape that fits
The Scotch Hibernian at his very best,
Frightening a decent woman, touch of rum
And fulness of the Devil in his hide.
He's quickly tethered, but he raves right on
In the rough Irish way, smites lustily,
And hurls death warrants at his captain's head.
He's bucked and gagged, a horse-bit in his mouth
Well strapped behind his ears, and so he's laid
To ruminate till morning in the pen.
At break of day, he's loosened: with the leap
Of tiger cat he is straight at the throat
Of man who helps him. Something must be done,
Else what's been done is lost. A mutineer
Who keeps it up as this, infects a camp
As does the plague and swifter. Custom bids
You send a bullet through his head and cast
His carcass in the trench; for in campaign
There is no court-martialing for common men
When they turn mutineers. Yet 't is a man —
Just now the very best of "number ones" —
With whom he has to deal. They 're hard to find —
Strong, nimble fellows, who sponge out the gun,
Ram home the cartridge — take the blast that comes —
Born and not made, as poets. Noble chap
When parted from his Satan: devil's own,
When they, as now, are joined. The captain tries
A saving stroke: he has him crucified
Upon the spare wheel, such as you have seen

Hanging behind the caisson: well strapped down,
To hang there till he or his Satan dies,
In sight of all the camp. All through the day
From hour to hour the captain waits on him
To ask if he will soldier. Finds Old Scratch
Still has him in his clutch. The end's in sight;
The pulses stopped. The surgeon says he'll die
Before the sun is down. So now with two
To serve as witnesses, the captain goes
Once more to him: tells him that death is near,
And asks his will with what he has to leave —
His little kit: his pay: last word for home.
At this, the devil tears out, and the man 's
Once more the master: he begins to weep
And says he 'll soger. In a trice he 's down:
Rubbed, dosed, and cheered with friendliness, until
Life surges back — close squeak, and yet he won
Out from the shadow gate. That topped the task,
For when Macdonald's devil hied him forth,
He called his minions from the others' hearts.
It is a fearful sight to see a man
Hang on the tree as slow life ebbs away —
It besomed all their souls.
Two years are gone,
That captain 's elsewhere, when there comes to him
A splendour of man, first sergeant's stripes
Upon his uniform. So once again
Macdonald stands before him: changed in all
Save for his birthright of majestic shape,

And might to swing it. He has come to thank
The Captain for his help in casting out
The devil that had ruled him all his days
Until he found that cross, and then rent forth
And left him free as man.
Why drag these tales
Out of the dark that cloaks infinity
Of just such shames; done in the ancient way
In sinning for the Lord. Deeds that wake men
For two-score years thereafter wondering
What they were when they did them. 'T is for those
Who fancy war hosts are celestial,
With planetary order swaying them —
Who see the well-shaped myriads on parade
Swing to the flare of bugle, tap of drum,
And think that law is there. 'T is might ye see;
Hard, brutal might, that bears the soul right down
And welds it to its neighbour with the stroke —
Yea, it is order — that of nether Hell.
Sherman was right — he knew. So do not bring
To me your rage and protest good the way
Our comrades use the water cure and else
Of shame on Filipinos; just as well
Complain that Tophet 's hot: that devils do
Their damn'dest in its circles.

THE MERRY TRUCE

Over against each other lie the lines.
It 's winter in the South, and that means mud
Knee-deep in roads and fields. So now the men
Squat round the smudging camp-fires and wait on
For the good Lord to send an earth that fits
For Satan's work: until the glorious sun
Shall shoot the thrill of spring deep in the ground
And shape the footing, so that men may tread
The ways of war. They while away the days
In idle jokes alike on friends and foes.
They are right neighbourly: the pickets play
Old sledge together; have their swapping trades,
And yarns of what they 've done, and what they 'll do
When springtime comes again.— And when there comes
A flag of truce, 't is a red-letter day
For those who bear it forth, while those who stay
Can gossip of its purpose for a week.
This morning one goes forth. Our general 's heard
That his old father 's ill. His enemy,
House friend and schoolmate, kinsman of degree,
Who leads the Yanks, will have the news from home.
So ra-ta-ta of bugles and a pole
With rag atop gives right to cross the field
Between the outposts to the foeman's lines,
And have an hour's chaff. Their general

Gives kindly welcome, grave, a bit reserved,
As fits a flag of truce, and better yet
A breakfast to the escort. Rules of war
Are set against such grace, for you should keep
Your foeman's belly empty for the chance
Swifter to smite him down. But those who bear
A white flag are good friends while it is up,
On mutual business bent, and so they claim
The mess right with you. Now comes idle talk
Of swapping prisoners, of sundry mules
A widow's lost and Federal scouts have found;
Then to the pith of it — the old man's health.
He is reported better, nigh to well,
But sore borne down with sorrow that his son
Is a damned Rebel. For yet other news
Our host sends with his compliments a jug
Unto our leader, knowing it will give
Some further consolation to his mate.
Back comes the flag again, then, Ra-ta-ta
And it is lowered. Foes we are again.
The pickets are alert, for well they know
That after truce there's apt to be a row.
There's nothing but a racket in the tent
Of our good leader — on until the morn.
Again the flag of truce climbs o'er the field,
With his regards and very earnest prayer
For further news from Frankfort.

THOSE MULES

There 's much of horses in our songs and hearts —
We 've shaped and sung them since we have known how —
For when man 's in the saddle he 's a king
Set over all afoot. But of the mule —
That understudy of the noble beast
Who with the porker rules our modern war —
There never lifts a lay. The soldier knows
The reason of it. 'T is the mule has wits,
While horse has none. The knowing Greeks knew that —
At least, last half of it — for they well-named
The horse as Allogon — the senseless thing;
Who owns the master's hand and so is praised:
While mule for his stout will is ever damned
In this world and the next; so far as words
And whacks can do it. — Here 's a tale or two
To show what makes the soldier hate a mule
And something of their ways.
An afternoon
In August; with but a hundred yards between
Our line and Johnny's. Air is hot and still
And mostly made of horseflies. The captain seeks
A moment's sleep. Last night Rebs had him up
From two o'clock 'till daybreak — just for fun,
Also to wear him out — the way of war —
Civil or other. Now the captain dreams

Of a fair nook beside the soothing sea,
When all at once the picket where the mules
Are anchored is in uproar: five of them
With that stout set back full they do so well
Have parted cables, bray their triumph forth,
And set their noses south. The captain jumps
For saddle-horse, rides hard to turn them back:
Heads two and shoots them: shouts to sentinels
And outposts for like help, but they aim wild.
They 're good at hitting widows' cows at night,
But mighty poor at mules. So on they go,
Leaping like antelopes, until they come
Right in the Johnnies' lines. They 're welcome there,
Roared by ten thousand, and are marched away
On brave parade, with merry trumpeters,
In sight of all our camp. — The captain goes
Back to his tent to see what he 's to do.
The "army bible" shows you how you may
"Take up" strayed horses on your next account,
But nothing says of mules who have eloped
Straight to the enemy. So now he 's forth
For veteran advice. The West Point chap
Knows well his trade: haply there 's one nearby
With ready counsel. "You are in a fix;
Three hundred dollars out; that 's two months' pay,"
Is the brief statement.
"What am I to do?"
"What other fellows do when they lose mules;
Contrive it so that when the inspector comes

Your mates to right or left will lend you three,
So soon they 've done with him. You 'll have a chance
To fill that hole next time there comes a fight,
If Johnny lets us stay." So it is done:
Right neighbourly the needed mules come round
Before the inspector, to be counted twice.
I sometimes thought I saw him grin a bit
As if he caught the trick. It is their trade
To know a critter they have seen before
Within a year or two. But custom 's law,
And they are comrades. Soon there came that chance:
A shindy harvested three lonesome mules —
C. S. above the U. S. on their hides.
They were the same old mules; they seemed right glad
To be where they belonged: to hear their bray
Well-answered by their friends.

Two lines — the "Yanks" and "Johnnies" — in the clutch —
Hard day is done, a harder is to come.
A hundred yards between them as they lie
Upon their arms to sleep. The moon is full,
And 'twixt the troops a dozen frisky mules,
As is their wont, are braying; like tom-cats
Raised to the N^th^ power. Now a sleepy call —
"Hello, Yank!"
"Hello, Johnny!"
"Let 's have a truce
To shoot those cussed mules so we can sleep,

We won't be worth a damn unless we do."
It is agreed; a dozen shots: 't is done.
So they are fresh at daybreak for their task.

Once more of mules and men. The captain 's bid
To shape an outfit of a dozen teams
Each of six mules. The empty wagons stand
Gay as recruits in their new uniforms —
Twelve prairie schooners with their canvas tents
Still innocent of grime. His task it is
To horse them with safe mules; to cram them full
Of war's hard merchandise of shot and shell
That they may face the racket — deal their store
Along the battle line — so empty maws
Of guns may have their fill. First he 's forth
To find a dozen "contrabands" who know
By birthright of mule nature: know right well
To shape it to the need. It 's easy done,
For in the black 's the primitive that fits
To primitive of mule. White hostler goes
Square at the beast in ugly mastering way —
"Stand over there, you cuss" — slaps currycomb
Down on the tender hide. What wonder, then,
The ancient instinct, ages bred, springs up
And out sends slap of heels. The negro comes
Sidling towards the critter, rubs his nose,
Palavers to him in that gentle voice
Soothing to beasts and men. Slips gently on
Until he 's master of the willing soul

That longs for friendliness from mastering hand
As all the herding brutes. Next for the mules —
The corral has a plenty: fresh from fields
Where they were bred in peace until the time
When they set forth behind the old white mare,
Bell-wether to the flock, who led them on,
Unshackled still, unto adventures strange.
Of shoe or bridle, whip or spur, they know
No more than babes in cradles. They 've not learned
To set their heads together in a bunch
And catapult with heels 'gainst hungry foe
Who sought a breakfast — art their forbears learned
At price of life — right useful wickedness
Now deep down in the pit, and there 't will stay
Unless the devil stirs it. From the lot,
Some thousand more or less, the captain picks
His six score carefully for teams and spares.
In what they have to do there 's many a nip
Unsparing of their lives. So with each six
Go two for swift replacements. Few enough —
A day may find the chance. It is a task
That calls for wits and faith that beasts are kin,
Shaped of the impalpable that makes men's souls —
With range from saints to sinners, fools to wise,
Cowards to heroes, in the uniform of hides
That to the unobservant look all like.
He 's good at it. With Agassiz he learned
The master's art of seeing what is hid
Behind the commonplace, that blinks the eyes

Of those who see all plain. Besides, by grace of God,
He loves all living things. So, one by one,
The offerings are studied each apart.
Here is the first for judgment. — If your sense
Of equine beauty 's fixed to fit the horse, —
Not fitly catholic, — he 'll seem to be
Huddle of disproportions from his ears
To tail and heels. But if you take him thus,
You 're neither humanist nor naturalist.
They both know well that every living kind
Hath garment of God's beauty all its own,
That needs be looked for largely from within.
Let 's scan this monster thus: First for the face:
It 's very gentle: with those notes that stay
Of all the myriad strivings of old times
To set a soul in flesh, perhaps the best
Till we came near our kind: and anthropoids —
Suck-giving mothers — get that yearning look,
Foreshadowing the deeps that we have found.
There 's a strange pathos in a young mule's face,
Soon beaten out: it makes you think he knows
He is a bastard: placeless in this world,
When else of life has strongholds in its kind;
Withal a comic look. Fruit-eating bats
From Zanzibar have that same comedy
Writ on their little faces, as they 'd say,
"This business of living is a joke" —
As well it may be. Few beasts find it out,
And fewer men. As for those wondrous ears,

'T is only custom 's 'gainst them. They 're well-shaped
As trumpets' mouths. They tell the seeing eye
Of age-long hearkening in vanished wilds
For tread of vanished hunger. Hap our own
Had been the like, but that our ancestors
'Scaped from the battle with their wits, and hung
Above the lion's path 'mid sheltering boughs
That gave them safety. Else our withered shells
Would seem as strange.
Go gently to the thing,
In blackman's way stroke neck and rub the nose
To see his eyes dance and his frame key up
As boy at play. Now pass hand o'er his hide,
That marvellous encasement of the form
Set from all else apart to hold its share
Of the great marvel, life. How soft and smooth:
Quick to the touch, informing all within
Of what 's without. Behold those shapely limbs,
Those legs the trimmest instruments you find
For dealing with hard earth — good thews of steel
Encased in velvet. Athletes' arms are fine,
So, too, air-cleaving wings. But here we have
The finished work of hap ten million years
Done on the vulgar dust. How delicate
For all their slaying might! They have come forth
From endless essays, each weighed in the scales
Where balanced life and death. The failure cast
Into the dust-heap: success sent right on
To the far goal. Now to the nimble hoofs,

Those equine wonders where the fingers five
Of far-off ancestors have one by one
In trials of the ages slipped away,
Until there stays alone this which does all
The once divided task. How shapely, strong:
Steel hammer for hard strokes. For it has slain
In long-forgotten ancestors and wilds
The lion in his pounce — or may bear on
Four times a man's weight with a tread as soft
As maid's upon the grass. So goes the task.
This first is judged right fit: the next that comes
Is shapelier, but at the touch of hand
A wince shows ancient fear has broke to life,
And that for war's work 's Satan. In a man
It may be disciplined, but in a beast
The demon stays. Thus one by one
They 're searched and chosen, and the tithe are judged
Of the elect in body and in soul.
Like choice with fellow-men would give you less
Than one in ten. And now the work begins.
First step: each eight are wonted to the man
Who's to be master. Slowly, with bare hand
He rubs each down. They love that gentle touch,
And cleanliness it brings. Then each is fed
From that same hand. A day or two of this,
Then comes the harnessing. Slow piece by piece
They make acquaintance with the gear, and find
It goes with victual and that touch of hand

Telling their lord is near. Then two by two,
And next in trains of six, they quickly learn
Meaning of *gee, haw, woh;* that 's swiftly done,
For now they are expectant of new tricks
And corn that pays them. After that, the bit —
There is a crisis; all the rest was play,
Pleasant and helpful, but that iron thing
'Gainst lips and teeth tells harder yet to come.
But this point 's won as all else, by degrees.
At first a bit of rope and then of wood,
Until at end of week the mastering steel
Slips into place. All these beginning steps
Are done beside the wagons, and where teams
Of fellow-mules are dragging on their loads
As if they liked it. So there 's nothing strange
About the business when they 're tackled to
An empty wagon in a smooth, hard field;
And if it startles, there 's the lord just by,
With unchanged voice that telleth all is well.
What else hath servant in this wondrous world
So full of happenings? So it is done:
The wont is in their souls — all mastering trust
In might of man: he is a stupid black,
And yet that marvel, man: set over all —
God's vice-gerent: dirty, but the lord —
They 've not been broken, but made bridle wise —
Wise in stout doing unalloyed with fear
Of the unknown. Now they are forth to serve
In the hard needs of battle, 'mid the roar

Of wrestling hosts. The demon leaps on them
In bursting shell, in stricken mate, but here
Comes voice of master ruling them to peace,
For he 's the master and they are his men,
And that 's the end of it.

A MIDNIGHT VENTURE

It is an evening when the harvest moon
Rides up the eastern sky, to light us on
The while we glean their last from noble fields —
So would the Master, but his servant — man —
Hath other use for fields, and here hath set
Athwart the ways of peace, 'mid trampled corn,
A war line 'gainst the South, waiting the stroke
From a great host that swings within the dark
Seeking the place to strike: as thunder cloud
Explores the spaces ere its lightning smites
The chosen mark for ruin. Now the scouts,
Hard ridden, bring the word the foe has swayed
Off to the east to try our weakest flank.
Swift ride the aides, and swift in countermarch
Go horse and foot back on the ways that lead
To this new peril, till that peopled place
Is once more silent as o'er-arching sky;
Save for a little group of men and guns,
A battery that stood amid the host
And with its warding had a castle's might
To rule for miles about; by some mischance
Of hurried orders left here islanded
In the deep sea of night, an easy prey
To half a thousand horse sent from the dark
Swarming around the cannon: and that deep

Is lit with praying eyes that seek the way
To profitable stroke. Yea, with the foe
Are eager troops who know as never men
To ride for such a prize. Here is a fix
That needs wake soldier's sense in that lank youth
Who stands there as the captain. Type of lads
In the hard wrestle of the Civil War,
Who 'fore their beards were grown and gristle set
Were burthened with the cares to weigh down men
Who 've grizzled in the trade. What shall he do?
The way 's wide open, and as bugle call
Will send his battery upon the run
To join their vanished friends, surely the plan
Was not to leave him thus helpless, alone,
To be down-trodden by a midnight charge.
Guns to an army are like crowns to kings,
Not to be rendered to the foe for naught,
But at hard-haggled price. Nay, but the boy
Hath soldier's sense in him that answer makes
To this heart's pleading: telling that his part
Is to await command, and do his best
By what comes 'fore the order. First he sends
Swift to his general a plan that shows
His place and peril; then, that message sped
By trusty courier, he mounts a score
Of his best men and sends them two by two
To scout the ways up to the foeman 's line,
And bring swift message of a coming force;
One to ride straightway back to tell its start,

The other wait until he counts the files ;
Then seek his path across the open fields :
Next sets the cannon so they sweep the road
That leads straight south, broad, dusty, stone-paved way
That glistens 'neath the moon, mid it two guns,
And two to right and left upon each verge,
So that the walls may shelter the bare flanks
For time 'gainst charge of horse. All is not much,
But in this dark these are the things to do,
Giving him chance to win on to the day.
Now comes the sorest burthen that a wight,
With Fate's load on his shoulders, has to bear —
That patient waiting for what night may send
Forth from its mystery. Slow hour by hour
The moon climbs up the spangled girt of heaven
Until it tells 't is midnight from the top
When it keystones the arch. The earth is still
As unplumbed deep, save for a cricket's cry,
Or those strange shadowy sounds of field and wood
From the wild life. The men are all asleep,
Wrapped in the trust the soldier gives to earth
So soon he lays him on that mother's breast.
Is that the thud of horse-hoofs ? Nay, a hare
Has seen some lynx eyes glimmer, and its feet
Thump hard the dry ground as it leaps away.
Is that the clank of arms from coming host ?
It is a partridge covey stirred from sleep
Piping its call of danger. So the night
Wears on in doubts and fears. Now comes true note

In tramps of hard-spurred horse o'er yonder fields
With steady swinging beat, with halt and plunge
To clear the fences. Then the phantom shape
Of eager scout, half glimpsed at first, then clear;
And now before the captain halts the man
To make his swift report. "Where is your mate?"
"They dropped him on the road."
"How many came?"
"Three hundred men."
"How far away?"
"Two miles,
Their horse hoofs blanketed. They 're marching slow
And still as ghosts."
"Where will they come on us?"
"By the wood road that falls into this pike
Three hundred yards in front of where we stand."
"You 've done good work, my man; now to the rear,
And if you find a troop on way to us,
Bid them ride hard. There 's scant an hour's time
Before the finish." Then to his lieutenants:
"They know our fix, and plan to ride us down
By a swift charge, but we will meet that trick.
Have up the men and drill them at the guns,
So they 'll be nimble when the moment 's here.
No bugle call, but wake them one by one,
And bid them keep it as a churchyard still.
Put prolongs on the guns for slow retreat.
I 'll to that patch of corn across the way,
Down where the wood road enters on this pike.

There I can watch them forming for the charge
And see it launched. So soon they are away
My pistol will give signal. Load and fire
With double canister. Three rounds of that —
The reloads by the muzzles. Then fall back
A quarter to that rise. There turn two guns
For sweep to right and left; so if they swing
To flank us, they will have no chance to form.
By that time I 'll be with you."
"No, you 'll be
Asleep by that time, for you 'll be in range
Of eighteen double charges — gallon each —
That 's twice ten thousand bullets down this road."
"Well, count out twenty when you hear my shot —
That will give plenty time to mount and skip.
If I stay there and still they press, then go
Lickety-split, straight back upon our lines.
Use all the steadiest men for rear guard
And turn the hindmost caisson at the bridge,
And rig a slow match to it."
"We 'll not need
To scuttle out of here. We 'll send their charge
In rags a-dancing twenty feet in air."

Now is the captain hidden in the corn
Close to the cross-road, looking for his life
Into that sombre wood arch, seeing there
The shades of legions, till there silent comes
Out of the darkness more substantial shapes,

Creeping like fog wreaths out into the way
With footfalls muffled and with orders passed
Whispered from man to man. Slowly it forms
Back from the sentry still as thunderbolt
Awaiting for the stroke. For half an hour —
To him full half his life — the spectre grows,
Until it is arranged. Then trumpeter
Rises in stirrups, ready for the blast
To send it onward waving in the charge.
Now while our captain, with forefinger set
Upon the trigger, draws his breath and holds
For the first note of bugle, forth there rides
A horseman from the front, who warily
Creeps towards his foe, listens with leaned head,
Then rides on till his shape is but a blur
Upon the shadowy way. There halts again
As if he saw grim death within that dark.
Now he creeps back in silence to his front,
Passing a whispered order. Then the host
Breaks into files and slips out on the way
Whereon it came, to vanish in the wood.
And as he wonders comes a breath of air
Out of the north that reads the mystery,
For in it floats a sound as sobbing bell
That far off rings a dirge: it is the note
Of sponge-staff slipping from the brazen throats
Where his men make them ready for the work.
This midnight drill told mischief to the man
Who did the scouting; bade him 'ware the trap

He knew they 'd set for him : so it scotched
The foemen's game to ride him straightway down ;
His own, to blow their might to rags in air.
Yet there is room for other ; yea, that host
Daunted in front should try a better move
On byway that will bring them to the rear
Close by the hill he 'd chosen to make a stand,
When the first stroke was given. There he hies
As swift as horse can take him. As he comes
To scout that danger in the north, he hears
A sound that swells each instant as a surge
Trampling adown the shore. First faint and far
As thunder from beyond the line of sky, —
The quake of air felt not in ear but heart, —
Then pulsing roar that mounts as does a flame
In baffling wind, until it fills the vale.
Now the glad echoes of a bugle ring,
Shouting a league the help that surges on
To hard-pressed brothers, clamouring to foes
The mighty hunger of a host that ride
With drawn swords at their hearts. Then by the flash
From iron hoofs he sees the avant-guard
Sway up the steep to sight, and now he swings
On run beside their leader, tells the tale
As on they spurring go right through the guns,
In roaring charge with welcome in a cheer
From men who 've watched the night out for the like
With other herald from their silent guns.
Then on the trail of foe for miles away

Searching the trodden path, to find at end
The foemen had won back into their hold.
So came the finish to this bit of war,
In march and countermarch and mighty deeds
That lacked naught but the doing — yet were done —
In valiant reckoning; and were as true
As they were writ in heart's blood on the earth.

After long years, again a tipsy chap
Gabs to our captain of old days and deeds,
Tells how when he was chosen for a scout,
He had well braided in his horse's tail
A plan of all our works, and how he bore
Straight to the Rebels tale of where there hung
Six good guns for the plucking; how he led
That host upon its errand, saw it turn
Upon the edge of ruin. "We were smart,
But you were derned sight smarter; yet you missed
The chance to catch us in the trap you set.
'T was too well baited. If you 'd laid your men
Watching beside your guns, you 'd had us, sure.
We 'd had you for all that, upon the flank,
But for those chaps who came in nick of time.
They seemed ten thousand by the roar they made,
All riding like the Devil on a spree —
The very wind of 'em blew us away:
And so you saved your guns. Next time you try
To play that game, don't make the trick too fine,
For then it 's sure to miss."

Yea, Tipsy Jim,
Your maundering wisdom 's good, and it may serve
In warring past the sky; but that is done
We waged upon this earth. There was a slip
In that fair reckoning, but who 'd have thought
That sob of gun, mere whisper in the day,
Would bay like watch-dog in the still of night!

EAST TENNESSEEANS

There 's need of scouting, for the night is here,
And not a word from all the men we 've sent
Seeking for touch from what we know comes on
Of flying columns waiting for a chance
To a swift stroke. The leader does not sleep
In this uncertainty, so straight he goes
Alone to search the ways for ten miles out
Where danger lurks.
                              In the good light of sun
A scout is best made with a force of men,
For then there 's help in peril. But in night
It needs be done alone, for, truth, you have
But hide and horse to care for, you may run
The where and when you will, with never thought
Of friend you 've left behind: or you may have
At anything that looms up from the dark
Barring your way. For in war's ugly world
The else safe counts as foe. Some find it fearsome thus
To search in shadows for the angel death.
It has its dark side, yet 't is not so black
As waiting for that shape to leap on you
In roar of whirling charge. Now he is forth
On the Lord 's errand — on into the dark.
It is a noble land, e'en in the night
It matches with the sky. — 'T is two o'clock ;

The waning moon slips up, a sickle now,
That hardly dims near stars, and yet it sends
A ghost of day to show the low-arched hills,
And here and there at cross-roads villages,
All lifeless, silent as a place of graves,
For in such time 't is best you seem as dead
For fear of death to come. — In the wide roads,
Hard trodden, white, where his keen eyes can see
A furlong's length, he gallops on with care
To keep the side path, where the hoof may fall
Noiseless upon the clay, 'scaping the ring
On the hard stone bed you may hear a mile,
In night-time's stillness. 'Neath the over-arch
Of the great woods, he slips on at a walk
With drawn reins, bent neck, watching sentry's hail
For wheel and scurry in the scanty time
'Twixt shout and shot. — Yea, it is marvellous
How peopled is the night with bustling things
That are and are not. Now it is a fox
On nightly foray; now the thing he hunts
That slips across the way. Now a raccoon
Or lumbering opossum plies the trade
Of chase or flight in immemorial war.
They startle, for they live, and safety lies
On his hard errand only with the dead.
Each glimpse of light and shadow hath its ghosts
That dance beneath the moon to vanish swift
As he creeps up to them. But now there comes
Under that arch of trees what seems a throng

Of unranked men, who, as he nears, slip out
Into the brushwood. He 's so close to them,
That if they 're foes 't would be in vain to flee
Thus at their muzzles. 'T was at least a score
That sought that hiding; half of that 's enough
From ambush to lay down both man and horse.
The game 's to chance it, spur right on their heels,
That they may hold him herald of a host.
Thus in a trice the rowels send him on
So swift he fells the nearest, and they turn
As hunted beasts at bay. Dark as it is,
He knows they are not soldiers, but a throng
Of motley country folk, who are not led,
But drifting in the night. At his command
They down their arms and yield them willingly,
As if they welcomed master in their plight.
Their tale 's soon told: they 're men from Tennessee,
Searching the wilderness to find the flag
'Neath which they 'd serve. For forty weary days
They 'd hidden in the forests, tramped at night
With pole-star for their guide. So on and on,
Near naked, starved and footsore, they have crept
By many a camp and march to find but foes
Where they had hoped for friends, until they were
As hopeless as e'er men upon a wreck,
Drifting they knew not where. The voice he heard
Out of the shadow told of valour still
For all the quaver that starvation brings.
"You 've got us, mister; we 'll go right along;

There ain't no fight in us. A month ago
You-uns would had a tussle 'fore we'd down.
Give us one good, square meal, and you will find
A right smart chance of it. You'll haul us in,
But damned if we are going for to fight
Agin the Union flag." So they came on,
As sorry lot as ever tramped behind
A silent leader. Now the outposts halt,
And word with the commander; then the camp
In early morn, and soon that good, square meal —
Heart-staying bread and beans and coffee, too,
That lights the soul of man. They look about,
And find whereat to wonder. "Hello," cries one,
"You've swapped your Rebel rags for Yankee clothes;
Guess you feel cleaner. See there, boys, — that chap
Who fetched us in: he's like the Union man
Who led the raid at Holston; guess he's hooked
That fellow's uniform. Damned if I see
Just where we're at. They've left us with our guns.
Been mighty perlite; 't ain't the way of Rebs
When they catch Union men." And now the sun
And tap of reveillé send up the flag.
Wide-eyed they gaze upon it, wonderingly,
As if the angel of the Lord had swept
Down through the vault. And then the leap of heart
Of men who thought them captives, who have found
That they have won to freedom from their goal,
And wild hurrah that hails their victory.

THE GEORGIANS

The homes were swept; there were no more recruits
Save for good cash in hand, and they knew well
Where cash was plenty and the bounties great
For any two-legged thing. The battery,
That needed six score, had but sixty men,
For they leak out in war, some to the brush
And some to mother earth. He must have men
Or else a muster out. So when he heard
There was a bunch of Georgians in "the pen"
Made prisoners yesterday, who would enlist,
His carnal hunger for recruits rose up
And sorely tempted him. No, it won't do,
He is a scoundrel who would change his flag!
The more he thought of it, the worse it seemed
To have those rascals bargaining for a place
That shamed the soldier's trade. His head was red,
And in him fancy for high-sounding phrase;
So he hies to the pen. — They are a lot
Of that old English breed of Georgia's hills
Such as he'd longed for; strapping, nimble chaps,
To dance about great guns or whirl them back
When the need comes; some five and thirty men,
Ragged and gaunt, to shape within a week
To pretty fellows. He has speech in mind
And it must out, so now he bids the troop

To sit upon the ground for his discourse.
"You are our prisoners, and would enlist
With us for service 'gainst the cause you swore
To serve as men. You chose the traitors' part,
As some good men have done, and now you seek
To play deserters' part. You should be hanged."
So on and on until his fume was spent.
They listened patiently till he was done;
Then rose their leader, who had whiled the time
Whittling a stick, spat his tobacco juice
In manner of a geyser, and began:
"Cap, that 'ar speech of yourn was mighty fine;
The trouble is that you don't know a thing
Of what you 've talked about. We 're 'listed men
Who 've sworn to fight with Rebels? That ain't so;
They just charged in and tuck us: set us up
In rows with other fellers; gave us guns
And packed us off to fight. We-uns have cussed
A mighty lot, but we hain't never sworn
To stay there where they sot us in them lines.
Now see here, Cap, we-uns don't know a thing
Of this damned war 'cept fellows have to fight,
And this here crowd will do it where they find
A show for wittles. We have been nigh starved
For more 'n a year, perished almost to death.
Six ears of corn on cob — it ain't enough
To keep a mule alive." Here was a case
For gentle casuistry. 'Hap 't was true
That these men were impressed and so had 'scaped

The binding oath of soldier and were free
To stand in arms for us. Were they now held
By service they 'd accepted though compelled
At point of bayonet? The schoolmen might
Battle this point until the end of war,
But here the scales were weighted. So he says:
"You know, my men, what comes if you are caught —
You 'll surely hang for it."
"Reckon that 's so,
If they get hold of us. We 'll see to that —
We 'll see that we ain't cotched." Where true men stand
In sight of halter, they will dig their heels
And bide where they have stood. They never think,
As does the knave, to scuttle, but they stay
With toes to line. So he enlists the lot,
Sends them to quartermaster for the change
From grey to blue, and sees them duly sworn
For loyal duty.
Next day comes the chance
To show the quality of these recruits.
The captain 's sitting making up accounts
Close by his tent door, looking down the field
Where the six guns are parked: at other end
The calaboose, where "bucked and gagged" there lies
An ugly Welshman: sober, a good man;
When drunk, as now, the devil. By him tramps
A sleepy guard with sabre. On the side
A Georgian whittling squats upon the ground.
All 's well, and so our captain turns again

Back to his papers, till he hears a cry —
"Look out!" There comes the raging prisoner,
Who's slipped his bonds, snatched sabre from the guard,
Charging across the field straight for a life,
As thirsty tiger broken from his cage.
In blessed peace you mizzle when a man
Crazy or drunk has at you; but in war
You needs must see it through. Our captain takes
Revolver from its holster; tries right well
To see that it is ready for the work;
Sets elbow on the table, lines the man,
And waits for the last moment 'fore he'll fire
Straight at the fellow's head. A hundred yards
With athlete takes ten seconds — tipsy chap
Will need fifteen to do it; so he has
Full time for preparation and to think
How nasty is his fix. He is to slay
One of his men. Howe'er it comes about,
It is a villain thing to do: it stays
As smirch upon a name. But there is help.
The Georgian takes it in, and with a leap
Is launched upon the run. To left oblique
Bent low and swift he smites the charging fool,
So that he flies three paces through the air;
Then turns him face to earth, sits upon his neck,
And whittles quietly. The pinioned knave
Claws at the earth, until up comes the guard
To lug him back to jail, a sobered wight,
Nigh ready for his work. The Georgian squats

Once more and whittles, and the field 's once more
The dull parade it was. The captain puts
His pistol back in holster, takes his pen,
And wrestles with accounts. He has not budged
From off his camp-stool, yet he 's been away
Beside a brother soldier who once lacked
A blessed Georgian in a like sore need,
So had to slay his man. A bitter tale,
Yet a fair pendant to the one that 's told
And so 'hap worth the telling.
It 's a street
Near by a camp, where lies a regiment
Fresh from disaster; glad of chance to creep
Behind the sheltering forts. In that command
There was a father and two likely sons,
All of his brood. It was a frequent sight
To see thus sire and sons ranged in a line,
For that time stirred men's hearts. 'T was yesterday
Both youths were slain; slain in a foolish fight,
For the brave leader, of the hapless kind
That know not fear, see nothing but the foe,
"See red" and charge right on, had lost his men
In Balaklavan way, without receipt.
Of such great poets sing, but common men
Who give their life for service rage o'er it,
Or sulk their work until that leader goes
And comes another who digests brave fear
And turns it into wisdom. The lone sire,
Crazed with his grief, sees there across the way

His colonel, draws pistol, bids him
Stand and take his punishment. The officer,
As on parade, stands stock-still, while the man
Sends his five shots at him. They all go wild.
Revolvers are no good unless your nerves
Are at their best, or when the muzzle 's set
Plumb 'gainst the chap you want. The hapless man
Sets to unsling his carbine. "Stop right there,"
Calls out the colonel. "You have had your chance."
It is unslung, the cartridge charged, and now
He lifts to fire. The ready pistol cracks,
The shot goes through the head. The colonel
Saunters along to camp as if he had
Nothing upon his mind, yet he knows well
That while it was a fair shot, fairly sent
In a good knightly way, it rang the end
Of his career as soldier. For the hulk
That lies there in the gutter he cares naught;
He gave him chance to win: what would you more
In the grim work of war?

THE BATTERY

You know the old war chariot? Three abreast
Its eager steeds; the jockey bending low;
To right and left the archers with their bows
And ready javelins. You see it bound
On scythe-armed wheels across the roaring plain
Reaping the harvest; see it smite the line,
Break through and turn — and fancy Trojan war
Had Satan's splendour to our day unknown,
When even slaughter 's smudged with commonplace,
Its nobler shapes all gone. But come with me
To nearby field, — nearby in time and place,
And near to our sad hearts, — to see that where
Is valiant death is splendour such as burns
Beholders' very souls. You 'll know that, when,
In the far happy days, war is forgot,
Save for its vanished glory, men will turn
Not to the Trojan legend, not to Gaul
Of Cæsar's fields or else of distant days,
But to our age, the last to bear this woe
Where valour rules vast engines and goes on
With might into the gulf.
                                        The day is hot
From the corn-ripening sun; but hotter yet
In loosed nether Hell of hard-fought field.
Half league away the line, here the reserves

That wait on need; between, the ground that 's won,
Strewn with the price of it. There in the front
Throb on the cannon like a mighty drum
Beating a tocsin, while the steadfast roar
Of musketry sways as the trampling seas
On far-off shore. Here it is peace; the men
Are scattered on the grass, some writing home,
Some cleaning arms or patching bits of gear,
Most chewing cud of fancies such as come
Jumbled into your wits when you wait on
For death to beckon you unto your place,
In his imperious way. A battery
Stands ready in the road. The horses feed
Out of their nose-bags, while the waiting men,
Ready to leap to stations, snatch a meal
From greasy haversacks. The officers
Have made their last inspection, every bolt
And bar and strap is searched, and now they stand
Silent beside their steeds. They know the word 's
With yon swift rider spurring o'er the field
Straightway to them. They knew the need before
In backward swaying of the cloud that tells
Where our line yields its ground. Now he is here
With swift command: "A run for it!" he calls:
"They press us hard." Forward! the bugle sings,
And ere its notes have echo, horses leap
Brave-hearted to the tugs, as if they knew
The need that bade them on. It whirls away,
That might of valour, six-score iron men

And six-score steeds that share their masters' souls;
Rushing death's engines to the gates of death,
All knit as one to slay that they may save
The Lord's fair purposes. It spurns the earth,
Beating to dust the fields, leaping the bounds
Of fence and hedgerow. Still the riders check
With hard-drawn rein their horses, that they save
Their might for what's to come — when half are down
And half must do the task. On, straight on,
We ride there with the captain on the flank
Beside the aide who leads. — Three furlongs won,
And we break forth upon the battled space
Our lines have gained — thereon to meet the blast.
First comes a shell from well-aimed gun, that stoops
As pouncing hawk, and in its whirl of fire
A man and horse have vanished: then the rain
Of those swift unseen messengers, the shot
Nipping now here, now there, a man or steed.
All bend them low as those who face the storm
Upon their way to saving when a ship
Is cast away and hapless pleads for help.
Swift fly the lashes on the faltering beasts
And rowels are sent home in bloody flanks.
The leaping wheels cut deep the field thick-strewn
With dead and wounded; those the bearers leave
In keeping of the Lord, because past help
Of all his ministers. There a dying lifts
A hand to show he lives: but on, straight on,
As merciless as thunderbolt that flies

Upon its errand, roars this might of war
Over the hapless, dashing out the life
That clung o'erlong to earth. They dare not swerve
For Christ or brother, for their task 's to save
The turn of instant scales; a second's time
Is nigh eternity in that high task.
The helpless bow their heads, the wheels roar on —
The summit 's won; — the bugle flares, "Right wheel
In battery!" The nimble horses swing
Swift to the call, but swifter yet the shot
Held for the fatal moment smite half down.
Yet with a leap the living rend them free
From cumbering dead and whirl the guns about.
Then in a trice they 're turned upon the foe
That swam the further slope ten rods away.
'T is double canister. The guns rear up
As forth they roar their murder, hurling earth
And all upon it far into the air.
Six rounds and all 's swept bare upon the front;
But on the flanks the riven host roars in,
Heads low for bayonet work. To right and left
They flood the sections, sweeping out the men
Spiking the guns; but now the centre turns
Near muzzles on them: one hot blast to right
And, with swift shift, like besom to the left,
And they are blown out, rent by hurricane
To bits and shreds that spatter down to earth,
What once were men — good friends and foes alike,
For in that mortal tussle there 's no choice

'Twixt friend and foe. Yea, there we slay to save
The Lord's fair purposes. Now the support
Of infantry comes double-quick to stamp
Into the earth what 's left of the assault.
They sweep on through the ruin with no pause
Save for the stumble o'er the tangled heaps,
Or lunge of bayonet and time to tread
Hard down with one foot while you heave it out
And set you for the next who scurries back
With what is left to bear him. Then the whirr
Of musketry that drifts on in the chase —
And so the task is done. The line is saved,
For the reserves are up to patch it out
In a rude front as they find room for feet
Upon the cumbered earth.
                                        Yea, it is done,
That Satan's deed of splendour. Look about,
And see what swath of harvest it has cut.
'T is just five minutes since it breasted up
The last hard steep and hurled it at the task.
See there, the trail from furlong's length away
Marked by the fallen men and steeds swift torn
Out of their harness. All the men lie still
As is the way of dead, or silent bleed
Waiting good helper, be it angel death.
But here and there a horse raves piteously
In the blind way of beast who knows alone
Of its hard agony. You 've heard that scream
From wounded horse? It is the sorest cry

In this shamed earth of battle. Swift there forth
Details to slay them, while the bearers go
On jog trot to their task. Here by our side
Lie quivering heaps, where horse and man are mixed
With wrecks of carriages that bore the guns
All splintered by the blast that swept the foe
To right and left when centre section whirled
For the last conquering stroke. Ay, 't is done —
The task for which it waited — like a sphere
That hungers blindly through the frozen voids
Until it finds the end in one vast stroke
That fits His purposes and recreates
With its own ruin.
Look once more and see
The old war chariot. Set it 'gainst this scene,
And know thy time hath splendour to the eyes
That have the sight for it; splendour of men
Who giants are to pigmies of old days —
Who by their might will part them from this shame
Of stricken fields.

THE EAGER MUSTER

ONCE more it is the mad year sixty-two,
When came the mightiest wrestle of the war
That shook the earth. Bragg's host had rent our lines,
And like a mighty sea swept onward north.
The fringe of the vast surge had swept our wreck,
Our rear guards, and our new lines like the sands
Before the waves. Yet here and there they stood,
Those shreds of armies, for a hopeless fight,
Save for the hope to win a day, an hour
Of time for preparation on the lines
Where we must stay and hold. There in the rout
That streamed on roads and by-ways to the town,
Where we should turn to bay, there came a troop,
Six-score recruits to be a battery
Horsed for swift work along with cavalry.
Some twenty more there were, but they've been lost
The yesterday in fight — a mongrel lot,
Ranging from saints to sinners. With them were
Disbanded minstrel troops and knaves from jails;
For in our sorry need we could not leave
Stout wight to play at checkers with his nose
At prison window; swift we had him out,
And swiftly swore him in to serve the Lord
In Lincoln's host. There were enough of saints,
Of Cromwell's type, to shape the iron frame

So it would hold those rascals to their place.
Chief of those masterful hail Austin Earle,
First sergeant: first of men in manliness;
You little, scrawny chap from Tennessee,
Slave-holder who had pondered it to end:
Turned abolitionist and won you through
Your way of battle, on for thirty years,
Because you were the swiftest thing afoot
In the hard smiting. 'T was a sight to see
The tiger's leap with which you smote the fool
Who had to learn a gentle, silent man
With woman's face was sure and sudden death
To mutineers. So with the help of saints,
Who might seem sinners in this other day,
To you who read these lines, that troop was shaped
For stout men's duty when they came to seek
In Cincinnati for the outer things
That make a battery—guns, horses, gear,
Munition, uniforms for ragged backs,
And food for empty bellies. On they came
With myriads like them, needing all but limbs
And the stout hearts they bore, to make them fit
For task to come.—They 're ranked upon the street,
And forth their captain goes to shape the plan
He has to win those needs. There 's martial law,
With good fist right to clutch what you would win
So soon you have the order in your hand.
And here 's a city with fair chance to find
Now here, now there, the bits that may be shaped

To well-horsed battery. So straight he hies,
Seeking Lew Wallace, finds him in his bath —
The time is daybreak and the sentry 's dull —
Makes short work of his story — 'tis well conned
To have it brief. The general hears him through,
Says: "We 've no guns; we 'll muster in your men
As infantry." Has answer, "No, you won't;
That is an old trick — they have had my word,
I 'll burn their papers 'fore it comes to that."
"You 'll take a dose for it."
"But they 'll be burned
Before I 'm tried. If you will give me chance,
I 'll have a battery before night falls.
The men are disciplined; there is a score
Who know the gunner's duty, for they 've served."
"What do you want?"
"Impressment order good
For all I need."
"Hunt up my adjutant
And write it out." Then, with the order signed,
He 's forth, a despot with the might to seize
Whatever comes to hand — men, horses, guns,
So swift he finds them.
The town 's a roar
With teams that bear away its precious wares
To 'scape from feared assault. He grabs two score
Of horses fit for saddle, mounts on them
His forty trustiest men, then with his force
Sweeps streets to find the stoutest four-horse teams;

Chooses of these some thirty; 't is enough
For men and guns. The amazed drivers go
Willing to their new task; the wagons stay
Where they may chance to stand. Now for the guns.
A trusty scout has found that in the shop
Of Greenwood there are six napoleons
With battery wagon, forge, and all their gear,
Ready to ship to Morton, then war lord
Of Indiana, — governor in name, —
Who ruled his commonwealth in Cromwell's way
By being ever ready. So they 're forth,
Horses, drivers, guards, to the factory yard.
There stand the guns they 've dreamed of. What a trove!
Shining like gold, their frames of sturdy oak:
The hard-knit fibre gleaming through the oil
Like shafts of ancient spears. With pounce of hawk
The men are on them as the men of Rome
Upon the Sabine virgins, gently, swift,
All ready for the run. There needs be halt
To fit the toggles to the whiffletrees.
For this the wondering smiths are levied on
And set to work. The captain takes this time
To seek out Master Greenwood for a word
Of courtesy — at least to lift mere theft
To highway robbery. Finds him with his men
Busied with war-gear in its myriad shapes.
"I 've come, sir, for the guns that you have made,
There 's need of them."
"They go by train this noon,

It's all arranged."
"They go by horse straight forth
Out to the front; by night they'll be at work."
"My lad, it can't be done."
"It's doing now.
So soon your blacksmiths fit the toggles on
We'll forth with them. Here is the order signed
That gives authority." He scans the paper well;
'T is brief, but clear; giving its holder right
To do his will between deep earth and sky.
"It's robbery!"
"It's war, that hath its will
With life and else. 'T is best you write
Your protest 'gainst this wrong." The paper signed,
The bugle calls the assembly and we're forth
To seek the ordnance office. We lack still
Munition for the guns. They're pretty things,
But lack the saving grace. Now at the store
Where guns are victualled there's a host of men
Wildly about like search: the needed work
Of finding provender for twenty kinds
Of small-arms and of cannon. He, the chief,
Swears there is not a round to fit our bores
In all his heaps. Here is a sorry fix:
A battery in seeming; not a charge
Of shot or shell to fit it — worth no more
Than stars in space for all the needs of war.
In such a coil you guess hard — speculate

With the old gambler, Chance. So now the lad,
Thus foiled by fate, guesses that he may find
The needed ammunition on the trains
That throng the railway yards, for in that time
The earth was sown with it. So forth he leads
His empty splendour on his vagrant quest.
Cars, endless cars, some thousands more or less,
And trainmen striving hard to send them on —
'T is needle in a haystack of a search,
And yet there is a chance in seeking out
Those sent from arsenals. Now in a trice
A score of axes play upon locked doors;
The goods are tumbled forth. Here 's one that 's filled
With boxes marked as "twelve-pounder *howitzer*."
The hit 's a miss, and yet the train-yards yield
None nearer to the quest. What can be done? —
Here you should know that in the howitzer —
A mongrel cannon — there 's a chamber cut
At base of bore and half the width of it,
Wherein the cartridge fits. 'T is half the charge
Of powder needed for napoleons:
And what is worse, the fuse will fail to send
Its fire to the charge. So while the shot,
The shell, and shrapnel, and the canister
Have a like shape for both, the difference
Is all that needs be for the devil's task
Of shaping failure as reward for toil.
Yet there 's a way out Satan has not blocked:

And so the captain fills the boxes full,
Heaps limbers, cannon, battery wagon, forge;
Stows sundry tons on wagons nabbed nearby,
And makes all ready for a quick march south:
Then hies him to a shop where he may find
Bolts of red flannel fit for cartridge bags.
A dozen of these bolts, with needles, thread,
And thimbles, finish out an ample store.
Then for the march. — The men upon the guns
Are tailor-like at task of doubling up
The bags of powder, putting two in one.
'T is dabster work, and yet it serves the need;
The guns won't mind the fashion, so they have
A full gorge in their bellies; nor the shot
Question the cartridge's shape, if it but give
Hell's breath to hurl it hard upon its way.

'T was sundown when we crossed the pontoon bridge
And found swift chance out to the waiting lines,
Where guns were angels, few and far between,
And welcome as those visitants from sky.
That night we had a dance beside our guns
Beneath the moon — a nimble minuet
'Twixt limber and the piece: all to the tune
That number one played for us with the beat
Of rammer and of sponge-staff. It was day
Before the frolic ended.
Nothing 's told

In all this tale but trifles? Yea, there 's hid
Beneath the heap good bit for history,
Better than most she garners. 'T is that men,
Plain men, trained in the blessed work of peace,
Are soldiers in their hearts, and have the way,
The Cæsar's way, of straight on to their end.

THE OBSERVANT MAN

Now it's the rear of that defeat, Bull Run, —
Not first, but second: first was folly, this
Was mighty near to shame. Under the cloud
Of powder smoke, reserves were streaming in
To stay disaster.
                    Nearby is a field,
Where early in the fight the surgeons set
The tables for their task. Now we're forced back;
They've been moved northward, and the place is cleared
Save for the hopeless and for those who've found
Fair hope beyond the bar. Just then I greet
A sometime schoolmate: dearest of galoots,
Who being fledgling parson found his place
In the field hospitals. Of old — 't is true
But two years gone, and yet so far away —
The dear galoot had fancy that a man,
Even the priestly, should "observe" always
As naturalist: at all times seeking facts
In this vast thinginess of everything.
We knew the Lord had shaped him for pure faith
And not for sceptic's work, that cuts and pares
Down to the heart of earth; but he kept on
Observing this and that in mole-like way.
'T was plain he had served well — from head to foot
He bore the marks of it — in dust and blood,

Patches of lint and pockets bulging out
With tourniquets and bandages. 'T was clear
He 'd done Christ's work of help with soul and hands.
This I said to him, moved by nobility
That shone right through his grime. For answer had:
"I have observed a curious fact: this is,
That of the wounded brought for surgeon's aid
Just eighty-nine per cent. of them are hit
In arms or legs; that leaves but eleven
For head and body hits. Measuring, I find
That the proportion of the trunk and head
To rest of man is about six to ten.
My observation 's made on many fields
And on some thousand wounded, so it 's plain
This discrepancy shows some natural law:
It seems past finding out." Yea, it was plain —
The "natural law" of it: it is that wits
Are yet more discrepant. That man may be
Saviour of men, cap of nobility,
Yet drown at once in those poor shallow deeps
The naturalist explores.

MADAME B.'S REVIEW

You think that war is weighty; that its deeds
Are ever done with that Olympian front
Of Bonaparte in battle, which you know
In text and picture? Half of it is farce,
And half the rest low comedy, as fits
This comic creature man.
                                        The scene 's a field
Whereon a hard-marched thousand sits to hold
A ford against the crossing of their foe.
They 're hot about it, clearing for the fight
The barns and trees that block the way of shot;
Setting the cannon so the wheels stay firm
In the fierce leaps they 'll make; digging the pits
To serve for shelter, and in time for graves;
Scouting for place where surgeons may set up
The tables for their work so they may be
Out of the sweep of fire, and yet near by.
The leader of the force rides hard to see,
Now here now there to need, for he must count
On scant an hour for all. On further bank
The storm is shaping, and the foemen scouts
Send now and then a shot and take like hail
From our own outposts. Now the worst is by;
The men are in the ranks to wait what comes
With house set well in order.

What is there
Upon the road where rises nearby hill?
Ramshackle coach, the Southern kind, that serves
For hen-roost till it's needed to give state
To some forth going; negro on the box:
Within a stately dame. It's bad to have
Your foe upon your flank; it's something worse
To find a woman thus upon your rear.
So swift an aide is sent to bid her go
About her business; but he hies back
With word 't is Madame B., with message stern
To the commander, in demand that he
Hear her complaint. He knew well Madame B.
Some five years back, when he was but a lad —
The relict of a famous general,
An ancient splendour; sample of the dames
Who ruled the South of old, and shaped a court
In any cabin where they dwelt. Right masterful
Were those great mistresses; and so he jumps
To do her bidding as the only way
To have her off the field. He makes his bow
To saddle-bow, and is right glad to see
He is to her a stranger, who's to have
Short shrift of courtesy. "Are you the man
In charge of all this gang?"
"Madam, I am
Commander of this force. What would you have?"
"A gentleman to right a woman's wrong,
If there is such about."

"Madam, I trust
There 's one here at your service. What is it?"
"An insult to my daughter by a hound
Who wears your uniform."
"What did he do?"
"He called to fellow-stragglers as they passed,
'There is a darned secesh.'"
"That is too bad,
And if I had the knave, I 'd have him gagged
And bucked until he 'd keep a civil tongue;
But how are we to find him?"
"Sir, I 'm here
To seek that scoundrel."
"But, ma'am, we are now
With battle on us: just beyond the stream
The enemy are massed. You see their scouts;
They 've changed shots with our men."
"Sir, I am
A soldier's widow and a soldier's child.
I don't mind that: I 'm here to find that hound
And have him beaten. I will stay for that
Until it 's done." Here was a pretty fix —
A grand dame who 'd face battle for her right
Of justice at his hands. Should he refuse
To heed her plea and pack her off the field,
She'd win the game, have one more monstrous tale
Of our iniquity. So now he tries
Again a counter. "Madam, will you go
With me along the line; inspect the men?

It is the only way." Sure this will turn
The woman from her purpose. Answer comes
Pat on the question: "I am here for that;
I thank you for the favour; yes, you know
What's due a woman." He is in for it.
He orders to have all the men in place,
With word a mother claims that one of them
Has wronged her daughter, that she dares the risk
In search for justice. They must bear them well
To clear them from this shame.
All is prepared;
The men are ranked; the roll-call had; the absentees
Accounted for. And now she takes his arm,
Goes slowly down the front — five hundred men —
Scanning each face; and then 'twixt open ranks,
Searching along the rear. The chaps behave
As angels in the trial: eyes to front
And faces set as those of monuments,
With not one quirk or giggle from the host.
Yea, it was strangely solemn, this parade
With aged mistress, soldier in her heart,
Searching a thousand on the eve of fight,
To find the knave who 'd wronged her. — War is rich
In oddest happenings, for then the world
Is topsy-turvied, yet since swords were swung
Was never chance like this. — Now wearily
At the last man, she says: "He is not here."
And he to her: "Madam, the roll-call had,
When you began the search, showed all were here,

Save those on sick-leaves. Will you read the lists?"
"Sir, you are an officer; I 'll take your word,
Your men are soldiers. I am grieved to find
That I have wronged them. Ah, there was a time
I loved that flag; loved every man that stood
Beneath its folds. It all comes back to me —
That happy day that 's dead." She 's in her coach —
Makes her adieux as grand dame, passes on,
While we go back to dirty business.

THE GENERAL'S YARN

A STAFF STORY

If you knew Gordon Grainger, you 'd a chance
To know a soldier: every inch of him
Wrought on war's anvil by the hammer's stroke —
Indians and Mexico; second dragoons:
Hard schools for modest virtues, but they brought
Whate'er there was of Cæsar right to front.
He saved at Chickamauga what there came
Ashore from that wild wreck, and held it safe
Until we shaped of it again good ships
To breast that dooming sea. He did that task
Under the master, Thomas. Grainger was
Of the good second order: not the first
Who have the whole of Cæsar. For a day —
To stop a gap — I served upon his staff;
Had then the chance to see the easy way
Of the war masters: how a thunderclap
Was no more to them than the buzz of fly.
Hard day in that hard year of sixty-two,
In midst of hot campaign, we 'd stopped to feed
Ourselves and horses at a cross-road's inn,
Headquarters for the nonce. We 'd had our fill
Of what there was of food, and waited on —
Our heels upon the table so they 'd cool —

For cattle who won't learn that they should bolt
Their provender in man's way. In the next room
The telegraph was ticking, for we'd tapped
A nearby line to have the news from front.
As was his wont the general spun a yarn, —
'Twas tedious stuff; about some frontier post,
Women and whiskey, cards and Indians, —
We listened as was fit: the old chaps know
That's the aide's business. I noted for a time
He seemed to listen while he talked, and then —
The tale kept up the while — he took his pad,
Wrote leisurely upon it, becked orderly,
And gave it to him, then spun on his yarn
At somewhat better speed. Soon hustled in
The operator with despatch. The general looked
Indifferently upon it and spun on.
He gave it me: it told the enemy
Was breaking through our lines three miles away.
I passed it to the next, and so it went
Its circle round the board. But no one spoke,
For we knew better, till at last a lad
New come upon the staff and still right fresh
Cried out: "Why, general, what are we to do?"
"Shut up, my lad: I did that business
Some time ago, don't interrupt me when
I'm in a story. I was saying she" —
So on again until that weary tale
Was told out to the end. Then, horses done,
We're forth to see how fares that sore-pressed line.

It was all right; he 'd met the need as well
As if he 'd swung his sword and charged right there
In the tin soldier's way. I asked him how
He did the trick. "When I began my trade
The telegraph was new: I saw the chance
That somewhere in my work it might save time
To read the ticking: so I practised it
At frontier posts when I had plenty time.
You saw just now the use: it saved for us
About six minutes in a pinch; that counts
Half mile with infantry; with horse a mile;
Besides the blunders operators make
When they 're scared blue, as generally they are,
With Hell to pay."

THE ORDER

Again 't is Gordon Grainger, and a boy
Who ran a battery — when Johnny Reb
Did n't run him — as usual. Order came
To be at certain cross-roads just at noon.
This boy, dubbed captain, was right sure it meant
To get there "lickety split," but it was plain
As words could make it. So he piked along,
On roads he knew, so fast that his support
Of mounted infantry was ravelled out
For five miles on the way. Now he 's come
Within a mile of it and there 's an hour
Of time to spare, and so he halts, to blow
His winded horses, has their nosebags on
For munch of forage, while the haversacks
Are ransacked by the men, for Lord knows when
Comes the next chance to feed. The halt gives time
For swift inspection, so the lieutenants
Are hard about it, seeing that each bolt,
Spoke, pole, and bit of harness, all the gear
Of limber trays are just as they should be
For business that waits. Half-past eleven,
Support is up and shaped; artificers
Done with their jobs; battery-wagon, forge,
Packed for the march: and now they wait at ease

For lapse of twenty minutes; when they 'll go
On trot for that last mile.
                                        Up Grainger comes —
His staff about him — with the careless look
That in his sort shows that he 's full of care
For what 's to come. He sees the battery there
Loitering beside the way. Then with a jump
He is upon the captain, pouring fire
Right sulphurous upon his hapless head.
It now is clear enough his order meant
Go there with whip and spur. He set the time
For shortest possible. The captain waits
Till the volcanic burst has blown it out,
Salutes, and hands the order back to him.
"While that stands I 'll be there at noon exact;
I took headquarters' time." The old man reads,
Looks kindly on the boy. Then lifting up
His trumpet note so all should hear who heard
The other blast: "I took you for damned fool;
I am that fool myself. The order 's changed;
Eleven forty is the time you 'll be
Astride that cross-roads."
                                        Ra-ta, Ra-ta-ta;
A rush of heels and hoofs and it is done —
This telling trifle of the ways of men
When the true soldier leads them.

THE NEW YEAR'S TOAST

It 's on the Rappahannock, New Year's Eve.
The lines are nigh together, and the stream
That parts them is ice-bridged : so the hosts
Can be right neighbourly when they 've the mind
For kindly capers, such as fit the time
When men's hearts forth to home. It 's late at night
In the well-ordered camp of Federals ;
Tattoo 's long sounded and all lights are out —
So says the army Bible. But right here
In middle of the camp, a mess-tent 's lit
And fiddle tells a shindy : though grand rounds
Goes by a-grinning, and first sergeants know
But night and silence there. The uproar goes
Beyond the reckoning — to general's tent.
No martinet, but careful of his camp,
He 's up and forth to find what it all means.
Now at that mess-tent door he gapes and stares,
Finding the queerest frolic. There they sit,
Alternate blues and greys : Johnnies and Yanks,
In friendliest of converse. He knows well
The simple gamut of the soldier's sins,
And has fit phrase for each : but what to do
When your men mix up with the other side
In midnight revelry ? — Trying to shape
His wits for action, he is there espied.

"Come right in, general, have a glass of beer;
Johnnies, this is our leader: he's a brick —
You've seen him 'cross some fields, and now's the chance
To know him better. General, these here men
From Old Virginia had us over there
On Christmas Eve for supper. They have come
For New Year's night with us. We will watch out
This damned old year that's going, and we'll drink
To better that's to come, when we may have
One right good tussle that will settle it,
So we may jump for home — and we'll jump smart.
It's on the tick of twelve, so we'll fill up.
Here's to Marse Lee and Lincoln, — here's to chaps
Who've done their job; here's to the lot who'll do
The rest of it; here's to Americans,
Whichever side they're on; here's to the day
When we won't have to sneak off in the night
To tell a neighbour that a man was made
For home consumption, not to fill up Hell."
And they all drank that toast — the general, too.

THE SMUGGLERS

The scene is on the line where, by their arms,
Our men lie sleeping, weary of a day
Hard fought, hard ended, where September's sun
Crept forth beyond the arch of ravaged earth.
Up climbs the harvest moon, content and still,
Recking no more than other dead of woe
That shames the field it lights. There silently
Paces the captain, for his time of watch
The warder of the host; while here and there
On front and flanks and rear the pickets stand,
Scanning the mystery of fearful night.
Half league away across the trampled fields,
Dotted with sleepers who await the Lord,
The foemen line, with other faithful guards
Who scan like dark. Now from the rear
There comes the shout of sleepy sentinel
Who hails a train, slow creeping from the wood —
Women and aged men who bear their dead,
Gleaned from the field we reaped but yesterday,
Unto the nearby churchyards, or where lie
Their kindred by the thresholds, in the way
The Southerns grave their folk. Unto that hail
Our captain hastens, sees the woeful throng
Mute by the biers laid 'neath the forest arch
Upon the moon-flecked grass. It needs no words

To tell the tale ; the story is as old
As man's hard dealing with his fellow man
In the great game they 've played upon earth's fields
'Neath sun and moon, since sun and moon gave light
To show them how to slay. Why halt them there?
They bear the dead: grim passport on all ways,
Even those trod by war. Yea, but the man
Who treads the paths of war must doubt the Lord
And question e'en His message. In his trade
The neighbour 's ever villain, never safe
Until his life 's out. So our captain kneels
Beside each swathed shape and searches well
To make sure what it holds. First is a face,
A dear boy's face, the glory of its morn
Still shining in the night. The next a man's,
Grizzled but strong, the face the boy's had been
With two-score noble years set on its shape.
And then the common lot of battled fields,
So of the very earth they scarce need graves
More than the wild beasts, who creep back to dust
As best they may, swathed by the wind and rain ;
And now the last, well coffined, as it held
One of the better sort: the lid fast closed
Made ready for the grave. The captain calls
The sentry to him ; bids him break the seal
With ready bayonet ; turns back the cloth
Shaped as to hide a corse, to find his quest,
The trick of war masked in this garb of woe —
Great store of surgeon's gear ; the keen-edged knives

That mock best-tempered swords; the saws to rend
Poor shattered limbs apart; the tourniquets
To stay the life tide; other fearful things
That look like demon's engines, yet contrived
For mercy's fairest task; and further store
Of those great wonders that bid torment end
In blessed sleep, or in the fevered blood
Win 'gainst the unseen hosts that bid men die.
Slow, bit by bit, he lays them on the grass,
Searching as if to find if there be hid
A written word in all. Then carefully
Puts back each package, closes down the lid,
Waves the procession on, and with it goes
To where the bugle calls the enemy
For moment's truce and fair way for his dead.
There watches as the silent train creeps on
Unto its welcome past the shadowed field.
And with its passing enters to his soul
On that hard questioning of honest man
For deed that scents of shame. He knows full well
He is by law a traitor, for he 's given
Help to the foe to meet war's sorest need —
Help that will stay his line, send many a man
Back to the front who else had surely gone
Unto the grave or cumbered with his life.
How came he to it? But an hour ago
His anger would have smote his nearest friend
Who bade him do it. Yea, there came to him
A moment's vision of the mighty woe

That bided with his fellows — fevered men,
Who waste out day by day until they fall
Like leaves into the ditch — mere mangled shapes
That patient, hopeless surgeons strive to mend,
Yet fail for lack of tools to ply their trade.
So true heart rose above the written law
And hearkened to the Lord. Yea, that Lord's help
Is with him still as forth he goes to seek
The general of the host and give report
In the brief soldier's way: "Why was that truce?"
"To have way for the dead their kindred bore
South through the rebel line."
"You had them searched?"
"I searched them through. Six coffins held their dead,
The seventh, surgeons' outfits and supplies
To serve their hospitals in this campaign."
"Where is that precious coffin?"
"It's gone on
Into the Rebel lines. I saw it safe
Within their outposts. Surely by this time
It warms their doctors' hearts and stills the men
Who lie upon the tables, for we hear
No more their torment." Then there comes a pause,
While that grim soldier like a mother looked
Upon the youth before him, then away.
"You know the price of it?"
"Yea, that is clear:
'T is what some know as death and some as shame,
A man betimes must take to serve his God."

JIM'S PARDNER'S TALES

A Texan's stories now. An ancient chap
That I had cottoned to upon the trail
In western Colorado at a time
When Utes were on the war-path and 't was well
You rode beside a man. He was one-eyed:
A wipe of splintered shell had done the job,
As I found afterwards. But the one that stayed
Had light for more than two. It made me think
We 'd better kept old Cyclops in our shape
As we once had a chance to. When we met,
He had his Winchester 'cross saddle-bow
As he rode lazily. To give him hail
I said: "Good-morning, stranger; looking out
For trail of Indians?"
"Straanger," said he,
"I hain't lost nary Injun from my lot."
At first he was quite offish, till he found
We 'd both known certain places in old times
Where it was hot — and then we were quick friends,
For all he 'd been a "Reb" and I a "Yank."
That did n't matter; we rode now as men
Who something knew of earth and its queer ways.
The talk turned to the war, and when 't was ripe
I asked my question: "What stays with you still
Of nights and Sundays when you are alone?"

For I was ever curious to find
What 's printed deep in ancient soldier's brain.
Such tales are ever telling, and they have
For prying wits their value as bare facts
That help make up account of what is man.
" I 'll tell you, neighbour, there ain't much that stays,
Most seems all blurred, — sometimes there comes the look
Of a dear boy, — though I 've forgot his name, —
Who tried to give me his last message home,
But skipped before he did. They 're only two —
Two of a thousand like 'em I 'd have bet
I 'd keep for all my life. I 'll tell you those.
They are n't much, and I wonder why they stay
As clear as yonder mountain, while the best,
Lots more worth telling, where I 've been mixed up
With right hard fighting, where I 've come by holes
That ache right smart, are like a pardner's yarns,
Half misremembered and the rest all lies.
I 'll tell you first of Gettysburg; the other
Is clear off in the sky, and I don't see
Just how to get it back.
                                        I was sent out
With six guns and a bunch of cavalry
In Pickett's charge, to stop halfway and hold,
If they were licked back and might need some help.
I 've seen a lot of charging — that beat all:
Those chaps had glory in them, and they went
As if straight for the sky; as we rode on
In column by them, swift they danced away

As if we were corralled. They knew our part
And joked at it: 'You 'll never catch us here.
Come on in half an hour, and you 'll have
Share in the finish.' We knew mighty well
We 'd staked it all on them. — Halfway came our place,
That hole where we 'd suck thumbs and see our mates
Right in the game. Lord sakes, how they went on
Under that sky of shells from hundred guns
Our side sent 'gainst yon line and in the play
Of more than that. Before we thought it hot,
For men dropped one a second, now 't was Hell,
Hard mile of it, straight on. First 't was the guns
That did the work, and yet we saw it shrink;
Now with the musketry it crinkled up
Like paper in the fire. But it went on
True shot to aim, — a tenth of those who roared
As they ran by us hit, the rest lay there
In that wide swath, — and yet it broke right through.
We saw the gap wide open, then it shut;
A bit of racket past it, and 't was still
As if there 'd been no battle. Half an hour
We waited like the dead: knew mighty well
It was the end of it — the end of all
That made life worth the living. — Soon there came
An aide to call us back; 't was but two miles,
But 't was the hardest march that I have done
Or shall do in this world."
While we rode on,
I saw him wipe his one eye on his sleeve.

For long time he was still, searching the trail
And what lay 'twixt us and the next divide.
Then in another voice that told the man
Had organ stops in him: "I 'll tell you now
A story that ain't much and 's hard to tell:
We Texans were the vanguard in the march
For the South Mountain fight in Maryland —
You 'd call it Antietam, or some such name.
We were hard looking as we 'd come from Hell.
Boys often wondered how it was that we —
Most pretty decent fellows, true to friends,
To sweethearts, and to wives, who 'd slit the throat
Of any right mean cuss — looked Satan's own.
Some reckoned 't was the way we cut our hair,
Or rather did n't, for there warn't no shears
In all our troop; I give it up, it seemed
The Lord had made us so. And we went on
With heads hung down, as if each felt the rope
Ready for hanging, till we saw behind
There rode right nigh to us our General Lee.
We all together shouted he should go
And ride then in our front, to show them all
We warn't the lot we looked; so there he went,
And then the women and the children came
Out to the road, laughed, waved hands, brought us flowers.
They now were glad to see us — not a one
Knew who he was. They saw he was a man
Such as the Lord sends when He has a job
For men to do. The queerest thing of all,

He was n't there ten minutes 'fore I saw
Something was happening to us: we were changed;
We warn't the same lot. When he rode away,
We did n't scare the women folks no more.
That set me thinkin' hard — I ain't done yet,
Though it 's a while ago — of what it meant.
I see now it was Christ who rode with us,
Once more a man that we called 'Marse Lee.'
You 've seen him?"
"Who do you mean?"
"Marse Lee."
"Yes, as a boy, as boy sees such a man,
Far off and shy."
"So I did then, and knew
I 'd waited all my life to see a man
Built clean from heels to head, six feet of him;
And in his face a look that went away
Right through your soul and straight on to the sky.
I saw him often after that; sometimes
He was plain old Bob Lee, with not a bit
That did that miracle. I saw him when
At Gettysburg we came in bringing back
Our hulking misery. You 've heard men cry,
A thousand all at once?"
"I never did."
"Then don't: it is the durn'dest thing on earth.
At first it 's mighty funny, then it goes
Right through you like a knife; it tears your heart
And shakes you in your shoes; but as we looked

On him, our ache died out, and this hard trail
Seemed pretty well again. Our Old Jack had
Something the same, but 't was so tangled up
With his darned smartness that it did n't go
Right home to you; and Jubal Early, too,
That half-cracked cuss, when he was swearing mad,
As generally he was, would bring his soul
To snubbing-post and look off in that way;
You would n't mind it 'less you 'd seen it shine
On Marse Lee. You 've watched your men come up
Under hot fire. If your own soul is cinched,
You 'll see between the 'close ups' here and there
A chap who has it, and you know you 'll win,
For with him goes the Lord."
                                        Here came a pause
On this strange preachment. Back was he to earth.
He bored it with his eye as diamond drill
Cuts to the hidden mysteries of stone,
Volcanic, frozen; that had kept its black
Against the bleaching sun as it would hold
The night from whence it came. "Here mought be bucks:
They used to make for it when they are out;
There ain't no signs as yet. — Neighbour, you 've heard
The parsons tell how by and by our Christ,
Who 's been on some far trail since He was here,
Will swoop right down from sky. That ain't the truth,
He 's kept a coming thousand times a day
To find a shape that fits him; that He fits

For the soul's need that wears it.
And when He is n't in a man, He's here
In what looks like a man until you find
It 's not just that, but is a bigger thing
Than ever man was. You have seen how they
Have set Him up in pictures; make Him sad
And sorry looking, — dyspeptic tenderfoot, —
Like lungers from the East. Mebbe He comes
Sometimes like that, but when He comes to me,
He 's six feet high, built from the heels right up,
With look that goes straight through me to the sky.
He was that when He first came; that I know,
For He licked all them traders with one hand,
Whacking that black snake whip upon their backs
When He cleaned out the temple. 'T warn't no job
For lungers and the like. You know how He
Rounded St. Peter to the snubbing-post
And broke him to the service of the Lord.
No cripple done that, but a great, whole man,
That could have led an army right straight in
And licked the Devil out. How does He look
When He comes down to you?" I had to say
He did not come to me in such clear shape,
But was too dim for seeing. "That 's right hard;
How have you scuffed along without His help?
Next time you 're in a fix, look up and see
Him standing on nigh hill; at first He'll seem
No bigger than you are; but look and look,
And He will grow and grow until this world

Is nothing but His glory and poor you.
Keep looking, and you 'll find that you, too, are
Only a part of Him, — and then this trail —
Don't care how hard it is — seems for a while
Right easy going. — Gee whiz! What is that?"
Now went the day-star's splendour from his eye,
And in its place came glare of beast at bay.
"It 's there, behind those rocks half mile away."
"But I don't see a thing," said I.
"That 's it," said he,
"We don't see nothing, but there 's something there
As plain as yonder sun. Those magpies know
That thar is something hid. They are sich fools
They 'll make the same fuss for jack rabbit's dance
As for a dozen Injuns. Mebbe coyotes
Have downed an antelope, — mebbe this and that.
We 'll squat and wait awhile and see what comes —
No, we 'll ride back a piece and cache our nags,
Then slip one side and peek. Mebbe they 'll think
That we 've cut sticks, if so, they 'll soon show up."

Just over the divide we found a place
To hide our horses: bellywise crept back
To where the sagebush and some stones gave chance
To peek right cleverly. "They don't take bait,
They know it is a trick. Well, trick for trick
We 'll match 'em out. — See here, Pard, —
I 'll call you Pardner, though I swore last week
I 'd never have another till I 'd slit

The last of Injun's throats, — we 're in for it.
If they were coyotes, they 'd have had their fill
And loped for the divide; like other scamps,
A coyote thinks he 's better if he 's there
Where now he is n't. Jack rabbits would light out
In half an hour. Just there they killed my Jim —
The best of all the pards I ever had —
A week ago. He got but two of 'em —
A mighty poor receipt for such a chap.
I can't half sleep of nights — no more can Jim —
Because he got so little in that game.
I just was moseying back when we met up,
For chance they 'd call again. I 've scouted round
For hope of that. I know it like a book,
A nice snug place to hide — good holes in rocks,
A little spring, made for their deviltry.
But they don't know there is a place just there,
Four hundred yards away, behind those rocks,
Where I can hide and clean out all those holes
With a good rest for gun. Now listen close:
You 'll stay right here; by 'm by I 'll slip around
And start the fun; it is n't just the time;
It needs an hour yet until the sun
Will light up all those holes. I 'll shoot six times
Before they will catch on and hustle out
To hunt for cover, — that will count for six.
There ain't more 'n twenty there; the place won't hold
Up to two dozen. When they skip, you 'll have
A fairish chance at them. If you can shoot

In old Kentucky's way, you will get some,
Though wind and sun is bad. Mebbe they 'll catch
The wing of my old gun and find Jim's pard
Has business with them. If so, they 'll hit trail,
And hit it quick and hard. They ought ter go
Straight for divide; their ponies must be there —
There ain't no place in sight where they are hid —
So they 'll go square off. Take the buck in lead,
For they 'll most always stop to help him on —
They ain't just coyotes there — that makes a bunch
So you can shoot for sure. If they turn here,
Light straight out for your crittur. If you camp
Because he 's tuckered out, get in by dark
And out by twelve o'clock. They 'll reckon that
You 'll try it about four — fool white man's time
That 's cost a lot of scalps. Just one thing more:
If they ride hard and scatter out, you take
The nighest on the jump. If twice your size,
You 'll lay him down, set both knees on his back,
Pull up his head with scalplock, slit his throat.
It does n't take ten seconds, for a buck
Settles right down so soon he feels your hand;
The rest will scare at it, for they don't mind
So much the bullet, for that kind er seems
Like the Lord sent it, but when it comes down
To tussle and the knife, they find they face
A better kind of man. Mebbe you 've seen
A smart chap do the trick."
"No, but I learned

Just how to do it when I was a boy.
An old man Harris showed me all the moves
Dozens of times. He was all clapper clawed
By just such fighting — kept a hardware shop,
Himself the hardest of the wares he kept."
"Yes, you Kentucks found out that trick and learned
Us Texans how. It has helped mightily
A lot of chaps in close call."
All the time
While he was schooling me in this new trade —
Or rather shape of old trade — I watched how
His eye went like a searchlight o'er the scene,
And where it lit the landscape seemed to turn
To a strange clearness. "'Bout time for a move,
The sun is nigh to right. When I get there
You'll hear the whacks — you'll know mine from the rest,
For they ring kind er like a bell. You'll find
That I shoot mighty slow. I never waste
No cartridges, for they git on your mind
Next time you need 'em. I will send six shots
In half a minute. If I stop, you git!"
"No, I'll go to you."
"The hell you will!
You won't, for I'm not going fer to have
You on my mind. There'll be enough to do
Without your fooling round." That was peremptory,
But "he bossed this here outfit," as he said,
So I held still. "Now you just keep your head

In easy cinch ; it 's coming out all right,
I 'gin to feel that He is somewhere nigh,
Thinking I 'm in a fix."
He slipped away
So in a flash I did not know him gone,
Until I saw what seemed a tiger creep
Nigh hidden on bare earth, — man-slaying beast
Sprung from the desert sands ; he seemed to cast
No shadow in the sun — impalpable,
Half smudged out in the waste, he fitted in
As brutes to wilderness. Swift he crept on
Until upon a little mount he sprang
Upon his feet and was again a man ;
Threw up his arms as Arab when he sees
Against the sky his Mahdi. As he stood,
I looked with him ; saw past him on the hill
A mighty Presence ; saw it with my soul
And eyes obedient. Steadfast as a stone
He stood there for a minute, then he dropped,
Back to the tiger's shape — slipped straightway on
Out of my sight.
As it comes back to me
This dreamy afternoon, I long to go
Unto that wilderness and set a stone
Telling, "Here dwelt a man who knew his Lord
Stood on this hill, and dared to lift his eyes."
But that would lie, "lie like an epitaph,"
Of him who was all truth. The other side
Would have to tell what was on other side

Of that complexity: "There dwelt in this man's heart
The ancient slaying beast that shames our kind."
So I shall leave him to those time-worn hills
And to this tale half told. The rest may be
As all shall be — God's silence to the end.

THE FORGOTTEN OUTPOST

Here is a trifle of a tale that tells
Part of the story of an ancient war
That lacks the telling in our histories.
They 're mountains and wide seas in weary bulk
Of marches, battles, sieges, and debates,
With scanty showing of the hearts of men
Who shaped our covenants, set hosts in arms,
And sealed the winnings with their willing blood.
For such uncharted infinites we turn
To stories nigh forgot, that set those men
Living before us, in their moments' deeds
That sum unto their kind, and show its aims.
Those snapshots give the chap, and not the pose
That leaves him out and sets a manikin
Where we needs have the man. Yea, this bit tells
How came that wonder at the warfare's end,
In the strange peace that broke upon the land
As day from night, swift as a tropic dawn
After a hurricane. One of a host
Such as all soldiers of that time know well,
Showing that we were warring not in heart,
But through some strange compulsion that hurls on
A folk in storm-swept sea.
                                                  The scene is where
The Southern army, that had swept its way

To the Ohio, now was forced to turn,
Foiled of its quest, in sullen rearward march.
Such times are tedious, for the opposing hosts,
Stretched in long columns, touch at front and rear,
And day by day have but to trudge right on.
What little there 's to do is with the troops
Of fore and rear guards, and the flankers sent
To guard 'gainst ambuscades and swift forays.
It is but drowsy business at the best;
The duller on this day, for all knew well
There 'd be but trudging till the armies came
Centred for work, a hundred miles away,
When Buell's force and Bragg's at length would meet
On some wide field, now slumbering in the peace
That autumn brings when harvest-time is done,
For the hard battle.
Close up to our front
Rode the commander, tended by his staff;
With them a captain native to the land,
Who knew its fields, its by-ways, and its woods
As only boy may know them. As they marched,
They came near to a farm that captain owned,
Until the enemy had closed his hand
In war's hard fist — right title to the place.
'T was but five miles away, and scant an hour
With well-spurred horse would take him there and back
To the slow-moving column; give him time
To see what Johnny 'd left of goods and ills
On his estate — two months a prize of war.

The doughty general, drowsing like the rest,
Said, "Go, it's safe enough: there's nothing here
But rear-guard messes; on that flank, it's clear
For good ten miles ahead." So he is forth
On well-known way: first eastward o'er a hill,
Where looking back he sees the serpent war
Creep onward to the south, — a broken snake, —
Front end the foe, the rear part his good friends;
'Twixt them a space flecked with the battling guards.
The one should be of grey, the other blue,
But both are common dun: for earth and sky
Are wrapped in dust — fit uniform for war.
From open hill his way turns through a wood,
Where sixty fathoms deep the ancient peace
Of the primeval rests upon the earth
As sea upon its floor.
                                        Here he would stay
And have refreshment, as the famished drinks
From the eternal font; but he must on
Upon his errand. Yea, though it was good
To know this peace, there was in it a fear
That strangely smote him in his inner soul
Right through the armour of the soldier's life
That so well fends him from the noble deeps.
Beyond the wood the way turns to the south
In open country. Swifter there he rides,
To win the time he'd lost within that fane
Where haste seemed profanation. 'T is a mile
And he will win his end. But what is there

Upon yon hill a hundred yards away?
A party of our flankers faring south?
No, these are bivouacked: and the fire tells
That they have cooked their breakfast, and are now
Ready for "Boot and saddle." They are foes:
Forgotten outpost; left within our lines.
At such times men think quickly, and the youth
Has wit enough to see his peril through.
Before his plight was clear, he 's galloped on
Until he has to face it. If he turns,
His fate is certain, for they are a score
Of steady carbineers. So on he goes
At a hard gallop straightway through the troop,
Reckoning the uniform of dust will hide
What else would tell he is a Federal;
Calling as he goes onward to the men
That they have missed their orders and should back
To 'scape sure capture. All is done so swift
That those good soldiers are a moment 'mazed.
Some grip their carbines: some give him salute:
All wait for orders from their officer,
Through good mischance not by. So there is time
For twenty jumps before the shout of "Halt!"
To which the farer gives no heed, but goes
Unhastening on his way. Another break
Most happy for the wight: the bugle calls
To saddle, so the men forget to fire
While aim is certain. Twenty seconds go
Before the troop is horsed and shaped to charge.

Meanwhile the easy gallop bears him on
So that a hundred yards of space is won.
Then blunder number three. There still is time
For their good carbines to drop horse and man,
But bugle sends them on before they fire,
While they with troubled oaths thus blunder round
For half a minute — share of eternity
When it sends space between you and the guns
That seek your life. His wits are mighty keen —
As those of hunted brute. He is all ears:
The stir of camp, the creak of saddle-gear,
The shuffling feet, and then the forward leap
Of front rank tells him what he dares not see;
For turn of head will stamp him as a foe
And end their doubting. At the forward plunge
Of hoofs on earth he bends him low and spurs
With rowels deep, and now with look behind
Searching the situation for a plan.
'T is clear the foe are horsed on cattle worn
By hard campaign, so that he draws away
From all but their young leader. Though they fire
As they surge on, it 's wildly, so their shots,
Though now and then they sing, leave him untouched:
And, better, 'scape his horse. For man may hold
His saddle when hard hit, but touch of lead
Is sorest handicap to best of steeds.
Five minutes' run and there 's two hundred yards
Of blessed room betwixt him and the field.
The men now sling their carbines, and it comes

To case of fox and hounds — with odds on fox:
Good ten to one unless he plays the fool
Or stumbles in the run. So now he cares
For horse and gear, sits back and tugs at girth.
The buckle breaks — well-known perversity
Of things inanimate, that tells the Fiend
Has else than care of souls. The saddle now
Is a new risk; he casts it off, and rides
The lighter for its riddance. Thirty pounds
Is good ten seconds in a hard-won mile;
Full half a league, if you ride to the end
Of whip and spur and shout until horse drops
And you take to your legs. — The path now turns —
The farm is long forgotten — to by-ways
That northward lead and circle towards our lines,
Where there is safety and mayhap the chance
To change this flight to chase. Still it is on:
The thunder of the troopers and their shouts,
With the swift patter of the nimble feet
Half-furlong length in lead. Yea, it is fine,
To ride for life: to be the hunted fox
When you know well your ground. Your soul is up,
Eyes keen, and muscles tense, and so you 're set
As man 'gainst universe: with skill and might
To play the game out, 'hap in end to win,
Because you are a man! 'T is worth an age
Of drowse in ways of safety thus to feel
This glorious loneliness beside the Lord

Of mortal peril. — Once more looking back
He sees the foe, out-breathed, have halted there
At foot of this long hill they could not breast,
And so give up the hunt. Their leader rides
Slowly toward him, dismounts, waves a rag
That once was handkerchief, and so asks truce
With right to parley. Now it is no more
A case of fox and hounds, but fellow-man
Who seeks his fellow's help. When he is near: —
"Good-morning, neighbour; we have had a race.
You 've give us a square beat."
"You gave me chance."
"Oh, we were all durned fools, and you were smart.
You played your game. Say, neighbour, tell us fair —
Are n't we-uns in a fix?"
"Come on a mile,
And you 'll have better breakfast than you left."
"No, no, be neighbourly and help us out;
You see we 're in a fix. We 've had no word
From our commander since he set us there.
We 're clean forgotten, or your scouts have caught
The orderly. We don't know these here trails,
And if we try 'em, Yanks will have us trapped,
Sure as we live." They were no longer foes,
But boys of one-and-twenty, of the stock
That loves fair play in the hard give and take
Of sorest war. So the fox turns now
To help the hounds to safety. "Come with me

Soon as I get my saddle, and I 'll lead
To where you 'll find the way."
"I 'll send a man;
He 'll catch us on the road." — Now they ride on,
Chaffing as merry friends about the chase,
Out to the cross-roads. There the saddle 's brought
And swiftly mended by the willing men:
Soon after cinched, he mounts and gives them clue
Out of their peril. "Keep the main road west
Until you strike the river: it 's now dry.
Ride up its bed for twelve miles, — then strike west
And you will be by sundown in your lines."
The bugle sends them forward: handshake ends
This moment's touch of friendship of those foes.
Our captain stays and looks on as they ride
Into the valley — up the hill to top;
There, turning in their saddles, they look too,
And with their wavèd hats bid him farewell;
Then vanish in the wood.
Now he is back
With the slow-marching column and reports
To his commander; how he was the fox,
And how the hunt was ended. "You did well
To save your bones from Libby, or your hide
From being riddled. Those chaps shoot right well.
But we will nab them with a troop of horse
Sent straight on to the river half the way
That they will have to ride." "That won't be fair:

We had a flag of truce, and they have gone,
As was agreed, while it was up." "You 're right.
I 'm not so sure it holds — and yet you 're right:
We must n't risk a chance of being wrong
By fooling with that flag."

THE GREAT RAID

You think that slaughtered men on battled fields
Make the main part of war. You blunder there,
For the good half of it is in men's wits,
In the swift thinking and the steadfast aims
When soul of man shapes to the rugged earth
And 'gainst stout neighbours' is that airy might
We know as victory for this or that
Of far-enduring purpose and command.
Rent fields and limbs are but war's crying shames;
Opprobrium of the masters who would shape
This world to serve their kind. They hate the mess
That steel and powder make, when stubborn minds
Miss point of argument and like mad bulls
Go head down to the charge. War ne'er will be
The art Jomini fancied till men are
Informed by logic; so they never fail
To catch the syllogism as it flies
And play the kriegspiel as philosophers,
With check and counter, and good umpires set
To judge when there be doubt, or players hot,
Who wins the noble game. Yet now and then
In our rude ventures in this infant art,
These barn-door dunlings of the men who wait
For artist's shaping, we may dimly see
The fashion of the finish; when this trade

Is purged at last of its iniquity.
The tale that 's now to tell has touch of this
Fair game of war play: for it knows no field
With mounds of hearsèd bones or monuments
To show that here held so and so and here
Another heaped his slain. Yet 't was a game
Played to a finish like a bout at chess.
What came of hard knocks was mere accident:
'Hap twenty score of hurts; some scattered graves
Where quavering women laid their trust in God;
And lop-limbed fellows who had ample pay
In pensions and the right to spin their yarns
By cosy firesides: scarce more mischance
Than comes from mimic fights in Germany,
When its great war-lord sets his hosts afield
To trample down the corn and show the world
What might be in his hand for devil's work —
Sad happenings, but small price for the game.

'T was in our Lord's good year of sixty-three: —
Or was it Satan's? — when this goodly earth
Was sown with dragon's teeth instead of grain:
When from the Atlantic out to western verge
Of field that knew the plough sprang up armed men
In hosts no land had known in all the age
Since that last beast came to the wilderness,
Changing its peace to never ending war.
Two years of combat had shaped well their ranks
From clumsy might into the nimbleness

Of acrobats who swing them in the air.
It was the time when Gettysburg drew near,
When in the west the watching hosts were set
By Chattanooga's hills, and all the earth
From the Ohio to the Tennessee,
Long trampled by the foemen, lay a waste;
When crippled men and women strove to win
Scant chance of life amid its ruined homes, —
Sole mark of nearby war, save for the toil
Of mill and factory wherein we shaped
The myriad needs of those on-toiling hosts,
From monitors to batter Vicksburg down
To surgeon's tools for mending battered men,
Biscuits and bridges, shoes and shells and guns,
By train and shipload ever to the lines —
A nation's substance for the maw of war.
The demon must be fed, for if it starve
But for a day, it helpless sinks and dies.
Such is the so-called *base* of all the might
By which we strove to rend the South apart
With the stout wedge that opened Sherman's way
Unto the sea and brought us victory —
Yea, better, brought us peace. It is a town,
This Cincinnati, on the northern shore
Of the great river which had formed the moat
Impassable to all the Southern hosts.
Scant year ago, a hundred thousand men
Had swung into its verge and halted there
Before a land in arms. So it seemed safe

To find this treasure house, with ten-score miles
Between it and the semblance of a force,
Unguarded and alone. All of our foes
Were swept from sight or in the clutch of lines
That held them fast and safely. So they toiled,
Those helpers of our soldiers, in their shops
As their far brothers on the Tennessee,
In the great centred purpose, with no fear
Of danger leaping on them. Yet it hung
As unseen sword in air, for in that wild,
That brooding desolation of long war,
There was a marvel in the ancient art
Of smiting swift with stroke that found its end:
The dauntless Morgan, chief of partisans,
Who played on earth with thunderbolts of sky.
The rumours had it he with broken force
Was nursing sore hurts in the Georgian hills,
And mending his lean ranks. Our searching scouts
In long months' forays found no trace of him,
And judged his part was done. — Thus till a morn
With an odd happening: the packet-boats
That plied the Ohio in their daily round,
Each parting from its post at 'customed time,
Vanished as clouds in air. We nothing knew
Save that they 'd met strange end. Then, in an hour,
The telegraph was still, and so we guessed —
As soldiers must — right surely what it meant:
That Morgan was upon us. He had come
With such sure swiftness that he 'd balked our scouts,

Captured the packets, ferried o'er the stream,
And now was ready to strike to his goal,
In capture of our base. Another hour
In came the messages that men had borne
Hard riding to the stations on the north,
Showing we'd read it right; that he was there,
Five thousand strong, with twelve guns, men still fresh,
But horses jaded. So he must remount
With captures from the farmers. Thus we'd have
Two days, 'hap three, before he on us came.
To bar this veteran host we had of force
But shreds and fag-ends, recruits for the front,
Headquarters guards, and men from hospitals —
In all, the half of his well-knit array.
Then was a scurry up and down the place
To shape a plan and have it swift afoot.
Never before were deeds so done to prove
What might lies sleeping in a nation's heart
That holds high purposes. Swift forth there came
From every farm-house men who in good toil
Had found their way to war. They went straight on,
Each as he willed, to hamper or to smite
This foe dropped from the sky. The cross-roads knew
Once more the stubborn throngs with rustic arms,
Wherewith our folk have smote the ages on
Whoever might assail, with force that breaks
Like cloud before the wind of veterans' stroke,
But vexes, wearies, shears their strength away,
And balks their best-laid plans. They felled the trees

To block the ways, or broke the bridges down,
So that his guns and wagons need creep on
For time at snail's pace; made him often pause
Upon his way to glean afar with arms
What he had hoped to pluck in marching on.
Within the town the leader of our men,
Stout Burnside, met the need with veteran skill.
Swift with his messages he gathered in
A force to chase the foe. Up river came
A fleet of gunboats, little flimsy things
Beside the monsters of the deep that send
Volcanic might afar, but serving well
To sweep the shores and forests and stay troops
That tried a crossing. 'T was a well-set plan
To keep the raiders ever so beset
They might not win recruits from malcontents
Or from the South, and have no chance to turn
Their veteran host 'gainst home guards, and so gain
The conquerors' place upon the Northern soil.
For there was still a slumb'ring, treacherous brood
In all the border land that would awake
If 'hap a battle 's won. A year ago
He tried like venture at Augusta's ford,
To be swept back by Bradford's lusty crew.
There was yet mighty danger that the blast
From victors' trumpets would blow us a flame
To scorch us from our hold.
About the town
Gathered the few fit for the searching task

Of the trained soldier — scant two thousand men,
Who could be trusted to hold long and give
The brave pursuit a chance to smite the foe
Hard blow on rear, so that he would not dare
To try the final venture of assault,
But must hie on for safety in his raid
That might range far, but sure would fret away
His strength to ruin. There was no mustering
Of raw men in those ranks a charge swift turns
Into a rout: the leader trusted well
Unto the well-trained few to strike and stand;
To follow up the host if it won on
Into the town, and smite them as they went
About their ravaging. So all was planned
In the good soldier's way.
                                        The second morn,
Hard-riding scouts gave warning that the foe,
Swiftly new horsed, had brushed aside the throngs
Cumbering his passage and pressed boldly on.
Our spies told of dissensions in their plans, —
'Hap 't was but ruse to put us off our guard.
At times the rumours of their camp told how
They 'd try assault. Again they 'd seek the chance
For crossing of their main force at the ford
A league below the town, sending a troop
To feint upon our line. Once past the stream,
They 'd win the rear of our forts on the south
And turn their guns against us. Straightway then
Half of our slender force was hot afoot

To bar that crossing from the northern shore.
Three leagues of forced march in a July morn
Brought trusty regiment and eight good guns
Upon the river's brink, before the place
Where the Ohio broke in eddying whirls —
The "riffle" where a well-horsed veteran force
Might dare a crossing: perilous, yet sure
Save for the luckless, if no enemy
Waited to smite them; Stygian ford if tried
'Gainst well-aimed shot. Straightway the scouts
Breasted the flood and flung themselves afar
Through woods and fields, to win touch with the foe
And judge his purpose, while the waiting line
Made ready for their task. Keen axes rang,
Felling the ancient trees beside the stream, —
Those warders of the land against the flood
That hurls upon it from the far-off hills, —
Making of boughs a tangle where the foes
Who won them through the wave would dance the while
Our rifles played on them. Such is swift work
When half a thousand share it. In a trice
What was the possible for daring men
Changed to a hopeless venture none would try
Who had trained war sense. Soon hard-ridden scouts
Come one by one with news a slender force —
Mayhap a squadron — strikes straight for the ford;
Ev'n now their skirmishers peer through the wood
To change long shots with us. Then other scouts
Who 'd circled round that troop made it full sure

We faced a front where half a hundred foes
Held purposeless our thousand, while the host
Went straightway for the city on a march
Six hours sure would cover. It was dark
Before this stood out clear, and back we went
To hunt our enemy and bar his way
Unto the city, trusting few to hold
Where we had stood. — Night marching 's mighty hard,
Even to freshest men, but when you 've striven
From dawn to win a field and set a fight,
And then at eve must forth to seek another,
The Lord knows where, all sorts save Japanese
Begin to kick at pricks. So on we went,
Stumbling and swearing, yet with willing souls
The better fit for duty for their plaint.
The knapsacks weighed us down, our feet were sore,
The ill-horsed cannon called for helping hands
At every ditch and hill. One ponderous gun,
A piece for parapet and not for field,
A thirty-pounder Parrot, fit to smite
A league away, dubbed "Teaser" by the men,
Was endless trial to their hearts and thews.
A dozen ill-trained horses balked the task
And left us anchored to the way, until
With prolongs linked together on it goes,
A hundred men before it, with a cheer
And tug that swings that Juggernaut straight on.
Soon ferried o'er the river we are forth
To seek our place, well-guided by the news

Of the foe's march that our swift riders brought.
Right through the throng-packed city, streets where folk,
Brooding their peril, welcomed with a roar
The sight of ready arms, our column went,
Heartened by greeting, helped by food and drink,
But most by that glad cry of those who hailed
Our sheltering might as safety. Ye who 've seen
Mothers who clutched their babes to breast in fear
Of the on-coming foe know ill of war
Worse than the red field sends, for there are men
With man's heart for the trial. On we go
From miles of town to other miles of fields.
'T is midnight now, and up the waning moon
Rides in far silence that mocks stir of war
On this bewildered earth. So it has looked
The ages down upon a myriad ways,
When men have worn their hearts out in the march
To smite or save, — as it would tell to Heaven:
"This warring is the moment; all that stays
Is God's enduring peace."
Now we are come
To the appointed place, where from a hill
Broad, gently sloping, deep, the road sinks down
Into a noble vale. On either side
Are villas set in gardens, on the left
A mansion with a lawn that stretches far —
A glacis for the guns. 'T is a fair place,
Where man has gathered in his trust to dwell
With friendly earth and sky. Yea, but the night

Hath villain Satan in it, and he comes
For service with our host. Swiftly the line
Deploys upon this pleasaunce to its place,
Lit by the battle lanterns. Swift the men
Hew down the shrubbery to clear the field
And heap the tangled ruin on our front.
The guns are set and trained upon the road.
Ere line is shaped, the leader of our force
Is forth with men for outposts and a plan
To daunt the on-coming foe. Near half his troops
He sets as pickets, grand guards and patrols,
A fringe to fit ten thousand ranged in line.
He knows the doughty Morgan from old days
As poker player, who judged craftily,
With no rash ventures in his wary game,
Seeking for certainties. There was the chance
That when he tried these outposts he would halt
For day to shape the danger, giving time
For our swift chasing force to come in touch
And hurl his rear guard in. Then in that coil
He 'd seek the moment's safety and hie on,
Leaving our line untried, else force assault.
The end is certain, for 'gainst five to one,
Mayhap in hour's fight the game is up,
In open field, for swift they wrap you in.
Good men will hold for long if foes but strike
Straight at their front, but 'neath a centring fire
From face and flanks and rear, their hearts go down,
And in the huddle up goes flag of truce.

The ruse will work if Basil Duke 's not there—
That Rupert who rides hard and never turns
Save 'gainst a fortress wall. Some spies brought in
The word that he was there, while others told
He had been wounded in the northward march
And left behind. So 't was a turn of card
Whether the bluff would soon be called or not.
Back from his outposts and hard ride away
Beyond their front to judge how near the foe,
Once more the leader sits to shape his plan.
First he must care lest spies creep to his line,
Finding its nakedness. 'T is now the time
The farmers troop along their way to town
With wagons laden for the market-place.
They 're herded in a barnyard as they come—
Set round with guards who bid them hold their peace.
'T is the rude way of war. There 's one more task
Before the finish: on the left there stands
The mansion built of stone, whereof the lawn
And garden-place are trodden by our men;
'Sconced by the windows and by loopholes pierced
Through its stout masonry, we 'd hold out long,
Finding the road and cleaning out the guns
If they were swept by charge. For all the din
Of singing host and toil to clear the ground
The household slept in peace; they nothing dreamed
Of coming war. Here, far from haunts of men,
They knew not of this rage that leapt on them.
Now at the porch the leader knocks and shouts,

Till from the window frightened women peer.
At sight of battle-line beside their door
They 're crazed with fright. 'T would trouble your sound
wits
To find a thousand devils where you 're wont
To know fair birds and blossoms, when you look
Over your lawn and garden as you send
Good-morning to the sun. — When it is clear
No man is in the house, or even lad
To do a man's part in the parleying,
The leader sends for detail — steady men,
Householders, fathers, for the ugly work
Of mastering these helpless. In they go
With swift plied axes, seize the frantic folk,
Clothe them as best they may, heap what they find
Of precious stuff in bundles, pack them with the lot
Out to the ambulances and away
For safety in the rear. Meanwhile, a throng,
Working like demons, turn the home to hold.
He who hath known of war hath memories
Of sorry deeds that startle him in nights,
And make him creep back to this blessed day
With wonder what he was when they were done
At bidding of hard duty. But the worst —
The Devil's worst — are not those done on men,
But on the helpless, on the Lord's forlorn,
Thus smote with iron hand. Yea, he was right,
The master Sherman, when he said of war
That it was Hell.

Now may the weary men
Lie by their arms and clutch, ere coming dawn,
At good forgetfulness of day that 's past
And day to come. Most sleep so soon they fall,
But here and there the tireless, those that go
Through long campaign unshaken, unfatigued,
As if the earth had shaped them for hard war,
Gossip with neighbours, droning on and on
Of what 's in hearts: and as their leader goes
Watching amid his men to judge their shape
And fitness for the task there is to do,
If Duke be with the foe when morning comes,
He hears that high note 'mid the ribald talk,
Of home and commonwealth and help of men,
That sent those warring hosts on way to death
That they might spare them shame.—And as he heard,
There came to him the splendour of his folk
As dawn lights in the sky. That majesty
Shaped by the ages cribbed in mortal frames
To sight most common, yet to eye that sees
By chance the deep, the garners of the faith
Of hundred generations that have striven
To lift their kind. There be times when the sun
Of the eternal day breaks through the night
That men call high noon, to illumine life
That we its glory know. So to that youth
Of two-and-twenty years strange chance had sent
To be the leader here; this grace was given
To see his fellows there laid on the sod

As the Lord made them, keepers of his faith —
His servant kings to rule the wondrous realms
Won from the night — and on for two-score years
That vision bides.
The dawn is in the sky,
The stars go out — down shuts the veil of day
To 'fend men from the spaces; so they do
Their little deeds unrecking of the deeps.
The scouts bring word the foe comes swiftly on,
His front three miles away and marching straight
Upon our outposts. There the leader speeds
To judge their dispositions and to see
What is to do. First is to brace his heart
As 'gainst the sky-line, half a league away,
Behold the war front lifts as wave in sea
With might to 'whelm him in its drowning surge.
Five thousand foot is myriads to the man
Who has to face them; horsed, they 're moving earth
As if the woods and fields were turned to foes
To have straight at his life. Then warily
To judge their purpose. At a glance 't is clear
Their march is troubled: they have not the front
Set for the stroke, but columns well apart
On separate ways. 'T will take an hour's time
To shape them for the rush. An hour more
For outpost work and scouting. If they dare
Straight on, the job is easy, for our guns
Have clean sweep down the road. They 're safe to break
Ten thousand set in column. But the foe

Halts at the touch of outposts, and his scouts
Search out the ground for action. Like keen dogs
That work a field for hunters, forth they hie
Upon their errand, nosing well the earth,
Counting the pickets, noting where grand guards
Hold post at cross-roads, seeking what the force
Is hid behind those brushèd lines where guns
Gape hunger through the ports; catching the glint,
Now here now there, of muskets in the sun.
They sum the story to their chief, who sits,
A brave mark for a shell, with field-glass up,
Upon a noble horse. 'T is that the host
That fronts him there may be full twice his own;
Its line and outposts fit ten thousand men.
They are well hid, as if they 'd lead him on
And spring an ambuscade. The brave man sees
Trouble before him. Knows the thing to do
Is send reconnoissance straight at the line,
Hurl back the outpost, draw the waiting fire,
And find the gist of it; else turn the flank,
And try it with a charge. It is his trade,
Learned well in Mexico, where masters taught
That war is action, swift, straightforward, true
To war's intent in smiting; practised since
On many a swift swept field. Yet now he halts
Before the chance he 's dreamed of for long years,
The very heart of foe awaiting stroke
That would bring victory to his loved cause.
And yet he waits and reckons — Cæsar waits

Upon his Rubicon so long it needs
To shout, "The die is cast," then on to Rome.
Put valiant Pompey there, and he 'll attend
The shaking dice, auspices, and debates
Until the runlet hath grown to a sea.
Such is the difference 'twixt this and that,
'Twixt first and second in man's mighty game.
The gambler wins who knows the cards and men
And never halts the play. Yea, while he waits
To judge the situation, up there comes
A dust-cloud in the west and spattering
Of distant muskets, first drops from the storm
That hurls upon him; yet there still is time
For the true first class. — Set it on the die
And call it cast! Let one battalion hold
For rear-guard work, then six to swing right on
To the appointed place and make the end.
If checked in front, his foe 's but infantry
That creeps while horse may fly. The sun 's just up,
And 'fore it sets there 's time to put the torch
To all that stays their army. Flame flies fast
With brave men's breath to blow it. Yet in vain
Th' horizon may recede until it shows
Rome at the grasp of hand, and still it needs
The Cæsar's soul to clutch it. So this man,
Master of valiant deeds, halts 'fore the task
Set for the soldier who hath in him might
To shape far destinies.
Now breaks that host

In column marching east, and we have won
Without a shot. It is a wondrous sight
To see a mounted legion march away
As in review before you: most so when
You 've turned them to your purpose and they go
Straight on the way you bade them. Yea, 't is done,
And in the commonplace that wraps war's deeds
As other doing, there 's no more to it:
The question is of breakfast. Haversacks
Are empty as are bellies, so they turn
Swift to the farmers' wagons that are caged
In nearby barnyard. 'T is a sorry crew;
They thought us Morgan's men, and all the night
Clamoured their treason, told how they were kin
To Rebels in his host and would be there
So soon they might. Their punishment is swift,
For in a trice there 's market for their wares
At every camp-fire, and their wagons go
As empty as their pockets back to home.
Now comes the after farce of this neat play —
This comedy of arms, mere mimic war,
As those will judge it who look but for fields
Heaped with the dead, and see not 't is a game
Where wits are matched to win a bit of earth,
The better if 't is clean. It needs be told,
For from the telling you 'll see how the tasks
Of strenuous men are done light-heartedly,
And not with knitted brows and burthened souls.
While bugles are a-singing breakfast call,

Our leader wonders where he 'll find his chance;
The others' share was scanty, and his own
Had vanished with his man, a tricky black,
Who mixed his foraging with work of spy,
And like enough is hanged. Now comes the word
That in our rear, a scant two miles away,
A true friend who had held his house alone —
(Good Master Greenwood of another tale)
His people forth for safety — bade him there
To share a breakfast. Ah, there was the chance, —
Temptation from the Lord, — for in the man
Was that wild hunger of the wight who 's come
From near the gate where "army fever" sends
Great hosts for welcome. Oh, but there 's the foe
Still marching by our front! The column's head
In east past sight, and rear guard in the west
As yet invisible. Mayhap he 'll turn
And try a venture. Nay, for there 's the dust
Of the pursuit that 's on them, pillar like
From earth to sky. There 's now no time for halt.
So wits and hunger argue, and the greed,
As is the way, won out. And he is forth
With two good orderlies to make him sure
Of swift news, if there 's need. The one he posts
On hill in sight of line, the other sets
Horsed by a window where is laid the feast
That waits good welcome. If there comes alarm,
Swift steed will have him there in fitting time —
Ten minutes at the most. He on the hill

To catch the signal and wig-wag it on,
He by the window to stay on the watch
With eyes bent on his mate. — Now for the feast —
Ham, coffee, eggs, da capo, silently,
With pauses brief to hand the sentry out
Fair share of it, with warning to look sharp
For chance of signal. Luculluses have striven
For time and world about to set fair boards,
But never yet have had a chance to feed
A famished guest as there. The hapless lot
Of Sybarites who 've never known the cry
Of every starving fibre of their frames
Know not what hunger means. It needs a wight
Who 's fed from saddle-pocket for two days,
While all of mind and body toiled their best,
And who at end hath won, to know how good
Is gift of daily bread.
The breakfast done,
The host, well skilled in things mechanical —
A maker of great engines, with a taste
For curious toys, would show some he 'd received
Straightway from Paris. Odd dolls — you mind the springs,
They strut and dance and quaver words of French.
The table pushed aside, the bare floor served
For boulevard whereon these manikins
Acted their comedy to split your sides.
On all fours with them host and guest forgot,
The Lord knows how long, that the tide of war
Rolled scarce a league away. Till from the horse

Of sentry came a whinny: looking up,
They see the loon-faced idiot who 'd been charged
Upon his life to watch the signal man,
With jaw-dropped wonder looking at the play.
Three leaps, and our scared leader 's on his steed,
Spurring his best straightway across the fields,
To save a furlong length, cursing the fool
That harboured in his hide. But when he comes
Upon the line, all is as when he left;
A dust-wrapped throng of horse that streams straight on
Steadfast as caravan unto far wells,
With never turn aside, and in the west
Another dust cloud marching in the sky
Where the pursuit strove on. There as he drew
Full breath of peace, there entered unto him
A vagrant colonel, sample of the kind
Who infect fields of action. Peace and war
Alike know much of them. This fellow had
A troop of horse behind him, two-score men,
All raw recruits: caught on the way to front
And tumbled to our line for chance of use.
Seeing the foe, he to our leader shouts:
"Why don't you fire on them?"
"If we did that,
We might hit sundry men."
"Why are you here?"
"We 're here to send those people on the way
They 're pleased to go. While they move right on
As fits the purpose, 't is no time to smite

For the mere slaying. You should know full well
The master Jomini bids soldier 'ware
Of giving battle when he is not sure
That what he 'll win is better than the gain
Withholding will afford."
"Who 's that fool
Who tells you not to hit with such a chance?"
"This Jomini, my dear sir, shared campaigns
With Bonaparte and left to us the gist
Of war's good lessons, taught us how to play
The game and not the fool."
Now comes the end
Of the great march in rear guard falling back
With many a halt and turn to smite the chase
That goes hard at them. Numbers like his own
Are gathering swift on Morgan, for in sky
To north and west and east the dust clouds march,
Telling the hosts that come. Then by our front
Rolls in the vanguard of the hot pursuit,
A troop of veteran riders, dirty, worn
To that hard semblance of a fellow man
More like to fellow brute. Their part 's to keep
The foe upon the march so swift he may
Have time for no forays. Close after them
The solid column, sweeping steadfast on,
Watching the chance to force the foe to give
Battle for safety. On the flanks here ride
The trustiest men to search 'gainst ambuscades
And sweep his flankers back upon his line.

The hunt 's well ordered, and the run to earth,
Though long, is certain — sure as ever chance
When dice are shaken in the game of war.
Far in the valley where the river flows,
We hear the cannon as the gunboats send
Warning to scouts who seek to find a ford,
There is no thoroughfare.
So it is done,
The city 's safe, and all there is to reap
Is but the aftermath — the sorry end
Of a great venture that was shaped to change
Map of the world, had valour been all man
Needs for fulfilment. — Swift the dust and roar
Of that vast flight and chase go past the sky
To be with yesterdays, and those days heap
Until they mount into a score of years.
Good years, for earth 's forgot the tramp of hosts,
And sometime foes are friends in its fair work.
Now and again he who has told this tale
Has wondered how it came that Morgan missed
His leap to Rubicon: until one night
He found in crowded hostel Basil Duke.
They lodged together; talked until 't was time
To snuff the candle out, of nearby things,
And turned them to good sleep. Then as the veil
That curtains off the deep rolled up and left
The far-off vista clear, he who once had
That task of arms here told called out to Duke,
"Were you with Morgan on the Ohio raid,

When he rode by our base he could have had
For little more than asking?"
"Hang it, man,
Why wake a chap to ask him such fool thing?"
"Because I've often wondered what it meant
That chance was lost."
"No, I was hit before
He crossed the river, and was left behind."
"So that's the reason that I was not licked!"
Sleepily, "I reckon that it was."

AUGUSTA

'T WAS in that year of thunder, — sixty-two,
When surging through the mountains on there came
A hundred thousand foemen past the lines
That fenced the North from ravage. All our might
From the great river east to Georgia's hills
Was swallowed in the flood that on us poured.
When we, the sorry gleaning of those hosts
That vanished with brave Buell in the deep,
Were backward swept until our remnant came
Upon the Ohio's verge, there found a ditch
Fresh dug as for our graves, with but one hope,
To hold the foe from crossing. Once his feet
Upon the northern shore, then all was done;
For there sedition waited leaders fit
To rank its hosts against us. Then the help
Of those who in the West had heard our cry
Would find another sea to overwhelm.
Where all else was despair there shone the hope —
Nigh hopeless in that night — to hold the line
The river set for us; for a hard drought,
Parching the starved fields and the hearts of men
To tinder for war's flame, had shrunk its tide
Until there was a ford by which the foe,
Keen-eyed and brave, could pass. Thereto we sent
A fleet to 'fend a crossing — good stout boats,

Well armed, and captained by men brave of speech
Who bore our trust with them as forth they went,
With mighty bluster, to the victory
Fools set in visions ere they knew their foe.

I well remember how we hearkened there,
In the vast stillness of an autumn morn,
The far-off tooting of the mighty guns —
Quick beat on beat, as if a giant's heart
Was throbbing in hard battle. So we knew
The foe was on us at Augusta's ford,
And all our nation's hope was in the hearts
We 'd trusted for defence — trusted in vain;
For soon the roar of cannon died away,
And down the river in mad flight there came
The sorry remnant of our fleet, with tale
That they 'd been overwhelmed by mighty hosts,
And saw while fleeing how these swept right on
And shaped their ranks upon the northern shore.

So hope went out, yet in the ancient way
Of our hard kind we with our neighbours quirked,
Chewed our hard victual, scoffed at earth and sky,
While in our hearts we thought of fields where men
Had found their way to rest, as Victory
Lit their on-going flags. Yea, bitterness
Soul-eating lay behind our shamming grins;
For we saw now the end in Freedom dead,
While we limp-handed stood beside her grave.

Then in that darkness came a messenger, —
Came as Phidippides, spent, — yet with word
The foe was stayed upon the southern shore
By a hard fight, with whom he knew not, for
He saw it from afar; long heard the rage
Of a fierce battle, as he rode away,
Quaking the earth and sky. Soon came his mate,
With a like story — how 'mid fired town
There was a vast contending. Flame and smoke
Hid all the rest, and none had broke their way
Through that volcano. One more on his heels,
Who saw the fires die out and 'mid the wreck
Our banner lifted and the northern shore
Of the great river untrod by the foe.
Yea, it was dazing so from death to leap
Back to the glorious day; to know as those
Whose hearts broke on old fields, down from the sky
The noble twain came with the might of gods,
Turning despair to wondrous victory.
Surely it came from sky, for all the earth
Was lean as ever churchyard of the life
To set such battle-line. All fit for war
Were with their flags, or where their flags had stood.
Yea, in that little place of miracle
There sure were not five score in shape of men,
Greybeards and lads who could lay cheek to gun.
They check a veteran host, when our great fleet
Fled 'fore the might that marched to certain end?
Nay, 't was impossible — the Lord was there,

In some strange presence shaping to his will.
So bowed as beaten men by mystery,
Our ribald host was stilled until we knew
The wondrous simple story: how a man,
A certain Bradford, doctor in that town,
Roused in the night by scout who told there came
Nigh to a thousand picked from Morgan's men, —
They who had smote us hard on many fields
And ever to defeat, — had gathered in
The gleanings of war's sickles, bound them firm
In a great sheaf of valour with the tale
Of what it meant if that host won its way
Across Augusta's ford. That they stood there,
As oft their sires of old, where men should die,
Sparing the Lord all questions save the way
To do their dying well. So they had held
Beneath their burning roof-trees through that night
Of hopeless battle, save for hope forlorn
That with them to the dust they might bear down
The leaders of their foe — laid on so hard
The shattered victors would not dare the ford
Unto the further shore. Yea, they had won,
They dead and living, to that mighty deed
And sent their conquerors backward in swift flight,
Their captains maimed or dead and all the host
Smote to the heart, as are the best of men
Upon such fearful winning.
When our force
At eve came to that ruin where the morn

Augusta's village lay, — mere shambles now,
Trodden by Satan's hoofs, — we found the folk,
The white-faced women and the wounded men,
The frightened children, little wondering souls,
Still by their doctor led, fighting to hold
The ebbing life in heart of friend or foe;
To stay the fires by which their wounded burnt
On war's brave altar. — 'T was the ancient tale
From the grim story of ten thousand years
Of what is man, — the image of his lord,
Whose name is Satan though it be writ Mars,
Jehovah, yea, or Christ, who 's changed His cross
For a two-edgèd sword.
We saw not that,
Nor aught of wondrous doing, save we 'd won
And paid the winner's price. Had our hard laugh
At that grim doctor with his double trade
Of sword and salving; said in soldier's way
They were a damned good lot who stood with him —
So for the veterans' prayer above the dead.
Then forth we went to other slayings, where
New-spilt blood blotted old, and faces white
Of other women bowed o'er other dead.
Ah, but this grim old world is commonplace,
And never men begrimed with dust and mire
And better worth forgetting than in war;
And in a trice Augusta's dead were dead
As those of ancient Rome, and on we went

To save the commonwealth by slaying all
That makes it other than a common woe.

On crept those years of horror to the grave
Wherein we earthed our best, and those who 'scaped
Crawled forth into the sun to mend their hides
And wash their tattered souls in Lethe's stream,
Glad of oblivion, good fate's best gift
To those who linger 'mid the wounds of war.

So on for forty years, until the sod
Sunk in the empty graves, and the old lines,
Where ramparts girt with cannon frowned o'er ditch
To swallow hosts, were smoothed as is the sea
When storm is by; here set with shadowy woods
And there with quiet sheepfolds. Thus dear Earth
Sets her fair ministers, the frost and rain,
The eager roots that find good sap in death,
Lifting her dust in other blossoming,
To smooth away her scars.

In two-score years all fades save memory
Of noble deeds and men, and they shine out
As stars when day is done: they bid our eyes
Look up and wonder how they came to bide
Forever in the vault, while we stay here
With the great deep between us and the goal
That they have surely won. So in the eve
Of the vast night I trod again the way

That to Augusta led; to question there
Of men and earth how that brave deed was done
And how it was forgot; how that stern host,
Shaped from the nothingness of common men,
Had set a battle such as ne'er was waged
On this tormented sphere: so swift and true
To reckoned duty and the angel death,
Where with their lives they sealed a nation's fate,
Barring the path of ruin; and went on
Into the silence stirred by no vain breath.

The earth is still the earth of that far day,
The hills drink in the river where the tide
Bears on its sheavèd springs unto the sea.
The village stays as then beside the stream,
All is as was of old, save for a place,
A place of mighty graves, where silent lies
The dust that once knew duty, but now sleeps
Forgetting and forgot. There o'er the stones
Still seared by that wild flame the children troop
On merry way to school. I asked a lad
To tell me of that fight. But he knew well
Of ancient famous doings far away
At Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill,
Of Gettysburg, and many a further field
Over the seas and down far ways of war,
Yet nothing of the glory 'neath his feet,
For all it was his own; as rich as e'er
This paupered earth can be with life of men,

Once valour, that is dust. So on I went,
Questioning the folk in street and shop until
I found the sorry remnant — five old men,
All who had shared the doing of that day
And lingered to our own: grim, silent men,
Who turned them all unwilling from the sun
To grope into the dark for memories
Of deeds they would forget. The first of them —
A merry sinner — bade me go to Hell
And ask the Devil of it. When he found
The way to courtesy — for in his hulk
Lurked ancient gentleman — he said to me:
"Stranger, that fight was forty years ago;
'T was a damned shindy and is well forgot.
You see the graves up there on yonder hill;
We buried it all there. Let 's have our chat
Of the next races, or of last year's crops,
Or the election. Come, we 'll have a drink
And gab of better things." Thus one by one
They turned their eyes away from that hard sight
I bade them see again. Yet in the end,
For sake of stranger, they looked back on it
With grey, set faces and with half-closed eyes:
Told me it all as I shall tell it you,
So soon the stage is ranged for that brave play. —
A simple story of the deed that men
Had done for duty, and had buried deep
In the grave's silence, never changing word
With one another of that wonder done.

And when I asked the sinner why it was
They 'd held these years to silence, low he said,
"You know damned well the reason." Yea, I knew
How hearts thus hard and stern and seared by war
Seal in the darkness bitter memories
That day may keep its sunshine and the night
Send blessed sleep to them. "And yet," I said,
"There 's Colonel X., he often tells the tale,
So it has grown for years and he in it,
Till now he 's all the battle." Then they grinned,
Each at the other, till the sinner spoke,
Now shyly as ashamed: "Our Colonel X.
Was hid away at other end of town
Until the fight was done. Now don't you tell —
The Lord made him for brag."
Then bit by bit,
Searched from forgetfulness, they brought to me
All that was left in earth of memory,
Mere shreds of tapestry, once fit to deck
Valhalla's walls, now unto tatters gone.
A task so simply done it shames the hand
That would give artful setting to the tale,
And bids the teller keep it to the key
Of the old blacksmith's shop, where it was told
By men whose hearts were true as ever knights
To noble doing and forgetfulness
Of valiant deeds long done. So I will patch
The tatters of their story as I may;
Chink up the empty places as we mend

A Phidian marble with our best of clay,
And bid our fancy make it once more whole.

It is our sorry choice to let men die
Unto forgetfulness, or keep them near
As mummies swaddled in the winding-sheet
We name our histories, or sugared round
With song as bees in honey; yet they 're safe —
The far away. Their stateliness goes on
Swift through the boundless spaces, or they bide
Now here, now there, in stars that may not send
Their glint across the deep. It harms them not
That we shape dolls and name them with their names,
And bid those puppets dance for our delight
Above the weary clods that we tread here,
Upon this earthball that was once a star,
Now lit by borrowed light. Yea, we may do
Our will with all those shadows, coin their dust
To fill our empty purses, tread our stage
Decked in their semblances, for they are far
And reck not of our doing.

THE STORY

'T is a September night; 'neath harvest moon
The fields are sleeping, burthened with the grain
The reapers have forgot, for they lie far
As soldiers in war-lines, or 'neath the sod
Waiting God's call to arms. The way is still
As sands of untrod desert, for the folk
Have fled before the withering blast of war
As 'fore volcano's breath; and this fair realm,
Shaped by its Maker for the joy of man
And home of His content, all empty lies
As in the primal night. Yea, it is still
As place of graves should be 'neath silent moon
That sends it ghost of day.
Now comes the beat
Of horse-hoofs muffled by the dusty road,
And there the rider creeping warily,
Watching the dark as one who knows 't will shape
The Satan he awaits. See, 't is a lad,
A white-faced lad, who peers into the deep,
Fearful but brave. And now he reins his horse
Upon the crest of overlooking hill.
There in the south, where shadowy earth and sky
Meet in night's mystery, in sky and earth
We hear with him the clamour of a host
Swift coming on — the beat of iron hoofs,

The clank of cannon-wheels, the bugle's cry
That sways a might swift onward. See, yon vale
Is peopled with a throng lit by the glint
Of fire beaten from the horses' feet;
And now it breasts the steep, and now its might
Hurls like a lava tide with scorching breath
On to the north away.
                                        This ancient world
Knoweth its Lord in splendours; in His storms,
His whirlwinds, and His rage of sea and land;
But never mightier than in thunderbolts
Sent thus in night from out the clouds of war.
But nobler sight it knows in that lad's face,
Fear-drawn but steadfast, as he counts that host
Sweeping from dark to dark. Then on its front
The score of keen-eyed watchers, horse and man
Seeking for ambush, ready for the blows
That rend the mask of peril. But a score —
Yet with the might to break the stoutest line
And bear account of it. They chaff our lad,
And laugh to hear him quaver in his fear;
They reckon not with his accounting eyes,
Nor with the hidden star that holds his soul
Straight to its purpose in his world of fear.
Next, half a furlong's space, swift surging on,
Comes troop on troop, the centre of the foe,
Hard-visaged centaurs, knit of man and horse
For bitterest deeds of war; and then the guns,
Leaping like leashèd dogs as on they go.

And after them a space, and then the troop
That 'fends pursuit and gives the centre time
To turn and send its stroke.
Would ye be men
Who knew but sheltering roof-trees, 'fore ye die
Hie ye as our brave lad into the night
To scout a coming foe, and pray the Lord
That He lend ye the valour of that boy
To stay your quaking hearts till task is done.

Quick as the rear-guard 's by, the lad 's away
O'er field and fence with half his task well done
And courage for what waits; on to the town,
Where well he knows the host will need make halt
And ready for their purpose — there to learn
Whereon the stroke shall fall.
Swift through the town
The vanguard sweeps, in emptiness to find
That danger lurks not there. Quick all the ways
Are sentinelled, and the far-ranging scouts
Explore the woods and vales. In comes the host,
Puts off its war shape, is for while a throng
Of merry men who lie about their fires
Or mend old hurts and gear. With them our lad
Is helping cheerily, when to him comes
The grizzled vanguard's captain: "Hi!" he cries,
"Here is the boy we scared into the hedge.
So now, my lad, you 'll go along with us,
You 'll show us to the ford, and have a chance

Of a fine frolic when we 're over there.
Duke has a way with boys that makes them men;
So in a jiffy he will handle you
Into a soldier." Idle quirk and jeer
Well conned soon tell our lad that they are forth
Unto the north, to be a banner there
For treason's hosts that wait but men to lead —
A chosen band, each fit to captain men
So that their might would hundred-fold in ranks
To sunder east from west and set a wall
From the Ohio's verge to Erie's shore.
They hail their task as done, for well they know
No force stays 'fore them, and they 'll ride so swift
That they 'll announce their coming with their guns,
And have dismay for ally as they go
Straight to their mighty purpose.
                                        Now our lad,
His message in his heart, has but to hie
So swift he may to give it. Forth he slips,
Sending farewell with beat of horse's hoofs,
As on he speeds to bear his warning home.
The foemen guess his errand, bugles cry
Swift warning to the sentries; but straight on
He rides, as rides the dove that cleaves the air
And cares not for its storms. Straight on, swift on,
Unheeding challenge, 'scaping from their shot,
For valour shakes the aim of dauntless men,
Or makes them willing that the hero pass
To his far destiny.

On, on, straight on
He leaps into the dark, but with the day
Blazing in his young heart; for he hath won
His battle with hard danger, for the spy
Knows noose about his neck a chance may draw
To choke his life out. Swiftly now the foe
Sounds "Boot and saddle," shapes again his force,
Half daunted by the deed that tells him men
Are set athwart his path. Then forth they march
As those who wait on danger, warily,
With clutch of arms and heart for all that night
Hath in it hid.
Oh, it is fine to ride
As rode our lad headlong adown the way
On steed spurred hard by foeman's grazing shot,
And with the night to hurl a score of miles
As dust from his swift heels; to know you 've won
What men will count stout winning; know you 'll wake
The shout, "To arms!" as you cry out, "They come!"
So down the Augusta way our lad sweeps on
With heart that beats to music of the leaps
Of the brave steed that bears him. For he knows
How well he wins the minutes from the foe
To give his comrades chance to set their fight.
Proved soldier, comrade, now, though forth he went
Mere lad upon his errand yester eve,
To win the end a lad alone could win.

Who had the seed of man hid in the child,
An hour's peril would to manhood spring.

Afar the farmers hearkened to the cry
His horse's hoofs sent, knowing it announced
The coming of the foe; knowing as men
Who generations on are bred in war
The tocsin in those foot-beats; so they arm,
Saddle their horses, and fling after him,
Alone, yet with the sturdy company
Of deeds that wait their doing.
                                        Now our youth
Sees where the hills stoop to the noble vale,
And far away its river rolling on
The gold the moontide sends it. There he sees
The darkened village, sees its lights awake
As watchers hark his coming; reckon swift
His message in his speed. Now 't is done,
This first act of that tragedy plain men
Set on their simple stage to tell us how
Their roof-trees cradle valour and their toil
Harvests brave duty from their well-tilled earth.
Rein-drawn, his faithful steed sinks down. The might
That bore him as a tempest — might of sires
Who 'd horsed the faith of Christ 'gainst Mussulmans
Beneath the Hammer's flag — once more was forth
In toil that dumb heart knew the master willed
And that in it was duty; so they 've borne
Their kinsmen to their glory, shared their deeds,
To sleep with them upon immortal fields.

Over his fallen horse the messenger
Steps to the waiting Bradford, — leader there
Because the Lord had set him for the task
That should be done upon this bit of earth, —
And tells his story in the words, "They come!"
"How many and how near?"
"Eight hundred strong,
Picked men from Morgan's force. They will be here
Long afore sun-up."
"What want they of us?"
"They 're for the ford; they care not for the town;
They reckon on their fighting over there,
And on a lot to help them."
"Ah, my boy,
We 've one more man in you, and use for him.
Go now to bed: you 'll wake when it is time,
For more man's doing. — Call our men to arms!"

Ye who have heard the long roll whir the air
As wings of angel Death, and seen men spring
With clutch at arms and heart, — all else forgot
Save the swift summons and the bidding stern
Unto the place to die, — ye go with me
Upon a hard-worn way of memory
Trod deep by war. Your dull ears hear the drums,
Your dim old eyes again as in this light
Of sinking moon behold a tumult shape
Swift to the ordered lines; and then the call
Of name by name and the sharp answer, "Here!"

That tells each man is true. So came our host,
The motley host that swarmed before the house
Whereto they came for justice; where they had
Election frolics, heard their orators
Set forth the citizen. — Look well at them —
Old grizzled men and white-faced stripling boys,
With here and there a fellow who had lagged,
For all the soldier in him, from the field
Because his dull wit showed him not the way
The Lord would have him go. — Mayhap six score,
A "home guard" such as fighting men despise,
Not worth the sniff of powder, touch of steel,
'T would take to scatter them. But look again —
See in that ragged row the stuff of men
Keen-eyed, set-faced, with that still waiting look
Of our stern race's war-lines. By each stands
The host that sent him here across the deep
The generations span. They are not lone,
But backed by spectres far off as the stars
But with their might to sway.
Ye who have scanned
The firm-set ranks that watched a coming foe,
Waiting the stroke as patient as the rock
Waits for the thundering sea, know how true hearts,
Who never knew a fight save in their souls,
Swift weld in battle's heat to wall of man,
That sturdy ancient of all warring days
Who serves the mastering will.
There for a while

The grim physician, treading silently,
Reckons the coming task and sees that all
Is ready for it. Then for the words that stay
Above the battle's thunder in the soul
And hold it to true purpose. "Hear, my men,
This message from the Lord. He sends to us
Nigh to a thousand chosen from the best,
From Morgan's men who but a week ago
Crushed thrice their force at Cynthiana ford,
Led by their greatest captain, Basil Duke:
They come not for us; they but seek the way
Across the river. We may let them pass
Unharmed unto their end, to see o'er there
A host of skulking traitors join their flag
And master all the land to Canada;
See all our brothers who have battled on
To 'fend our State from ravage hopeless fall
Before this doubled treason. Let them there,
And all this war is ended in a stroke.
The nation 's dead, and we may to our beds
And sleep in peace until we find our graves
By men who died to build it. What 's your will?
To hide you in your cellars — let them pass?
Or die on this dear ground for chance to save
What makes it dear to us?" Then from the dark
Quakes a faint-hearted "Let the gunboats fight, —
They 're strong enough for it, — while we will go
Across the river. There we 'll have a chance
To shoot them, if they struggle to the shore;

Here we 'll be trapped like rats." Again the man
Set there as master: "Count not on those boats —
I 've seen their crews and captains; they will run
So soon the fight begins. Yea, I would send
The blustering lot to bottom if I could,
And leave us here alone to take what comes. —
If we have mind to do it, here 's the place
For faithful dying; here beside our homes
On old Kentucky ground. See where we stand
And reckon it as men. Shall we die here
For chance to maul them so they will not dare
To try the crossing, or shall we here live
So long we may as cowards who 've forgot
All that our fathers gave us? If we fight,
We 'll reckon that we fall. It 's five to one,
And they our brothers in all save their aim.
Their leader Duke 's a man, and he will drive
Straight as the Devil to his end. See well
What the beginning means, and leave the rest
To God who sets us here." Still quavered out
The plaint of him who longeth for dear life:
"Where is the need, O captain, that we die
Here by our doors?" Then from the ranks there spake
The sturdy blacksmith, he who smites his way
With the hot iron, forging metal good
In shape for valiant use: "Yea, we 'll stand here, —
Here where the Lord hath set us for His work;
We 'll lay them on the anvil and smite hard.

Let those who 've mind to skulk go o'er the ford,
Or hide them in the woods, but we 'll stay here
And hammer out our job until we quench
Our iron in the tub."
                    Then for a while
The ranks are silent in the way of men
Who chew the cud of peril, harking back
On life's dear ways and forward to the realms
Made dear by hopes to come; then to the quest
Of what their manhood bids them do where now
Grim fate hath set upon them in the night
That shadows war-lines. Ay, so true men bow
Their souls in silence 'fore hard destiny,
Until He sendeth dawn to light the sky
And lift their burthened hearts — answer to prayer
That pleads for star in token of His will.
Then as of old in many a waiting night
Came prophet from the dark as prophets come,
Robed in simplicity of common man,
Who knelt him down, went bravely to the Lord
With prayer He ever heeds.
                    As they raise
Their bowed heads from their prayer and look away,
As is the wont of men when hearts are wide
Because He dwells in them, far in the east
Strides forth the splendour of the coming morn
With day's commandment to His servitors
To gird them for His tasks. None cry, "Behold!
The Lord is with us in the work to do!"

None knew in his dumb soul a might had come
To stay beside him and to bear away
His soul with earth's tasks done; yet now each one
Draws closer to his neighbour, knows the light
Of a new morning glows where the dark had lain
Upon the way of faith.
Then their leader spoke
Last word of counsel: "Men, here is the day,
And we are ready for it. We dare set
No line to meet them, for they 'd wrap us in.
Go to your houses; ye 'll the better fight
Beside your hearthstones. Take the leaders first;
If they go down, the rest will never dare
To try the ford. See there upon the hill
Their vanguard halts, and up there comes the sun.
Now be the Lord with us as with our sires.
Swift to your places."
The wide earth is still.
The night mists linger in the noble vale,
Folding their shadowy tents. The mighty stream,
Gold in the moonlight, golden yet by day
With sheavèd tide of myriad far-off springs,
Goes silent downward to the waiting sea;
Upon its bank the village with its roofs
Catches the glint of sun. Along the plain
By riverside and on the stately hills
Are fields of ripened corn that lift to sky
Their offering of peace. Yea, all is well
With earth and sky and stream. They know their Lord,

They bow them 'fore His might, and reck not of
The immortal woe of man.
There in the sun,
Sharing the morning's glory with the woods
That stretch their sheltering arms for wayfarers,
Swift shape the ranks of war. Now bugles shout
Far challenge and commands. The rangèd guns
Flash out, and through the quivering air their shell
Stoop as swift falcons to the ships in stream
To wake their coward answer in wild fire.
Awhile the hills and sky quake with the roar,
And then the recreant crews turn in mad flight;
Scarce singèd by the battle, forth they go,
Beaten by fear upon the dastards' way.
Hear the hurrah that greets this victory
Thus easy won, for now the foe sees wide
The gate unto the north — a cheer that bears
Their hearts far on their way. Their lines are closed,
All 's ready for the mighty rage to sweep
Straightway to further shore. Wide is the stream,
But on its breast the troubled waters show
The hidden bridge the horses will stride o'er
As easy as a brook. Their leader calls
Unto his captains, "Ready for the ford!"
Then to his gunners, "Fire upon the town!
They dare to keep their flag!" The cannon play
Their rain of death, and yet no answer comes
From out that silence.
Then with the Rebel yell,

That ringing cry that overtopped the roar
On many an olden field, the avalanche
Of valiant hope sweeps onward down the steep
Upon the silent hamlet — all so still
It seemed a painted village, with a man
Lone waiting in its street. As they ride on
Their shouts die out, and men who 'd known no fear
In charging o'er hot cannon know it now
In sense of waiting death. E'en their horses know,
For bred in them, too, is the sense of war
That smites their riders, telling that before
Crouches a mighty peril; see, they rear
And swerve away, but onward they are swept
As bubbles on a surge.
Now that lone man,
Our leader Bradford, who had scanned that tide
With planted feet and heart immovable,
Watching the fatal moment, gives the word.
Swift from each hold rings out, "Make ready — Fire!"
Now breaks that surge of war upon the cliff
Of steadfast valour; down the front ranks go,
Rider and horse, and o'er them wave on wave
Roars madly on the wreck; dead and alive
Are tossing in that ruin. Rifles play
From every crevice till the heap is stilled.
Swift ring the foeman's bugles, harking back
Their beaten ranks to safety. Once again
There bides that waiting silence o'er the town —
It is a stroke to daunt e'en veteran hearts,

And yet our leader knoweth with his men
It is but moment's respite they have won,
'Fore craftier assault. Ay, they know well
That those who set on them are kinsmen true
And take hard strokes as lessons; con them swift
And mend the next they give. There is no shout
Of victory for fight that's but begun;
But quick they turn to action; lay their dead
As fitly dead should lie; help wounded; search
Their fallen foes for chance to stay the life
That ebbs away — to find it shelter good
From searching storms to come. 'T is bitter work
That siegèd men must do when comes a lull
In war that beats on them. Soon all is done
That willing hearts can do for friend and foe.
The master of their deeds knows well that Duke
Will try no more assault, but ring them in,
Fire the houses, bid his cannoneers
Rend from afar, smite one by one their holds,
So winning to his end — and yet he sees
The half is done, for such stroke daunts the best,
Slakes bravest hunger for a far emprise.
There in that gruesome heap is laid the tithe
And forefront of his valour and his trust.
Yea, they must fall, but down with them they 'll bear
To earth their nation's peril. So his words
Give cheer and counsel: " Men, it was well done, —
" A good first heat; the next will try our wind.
Cling to your houses; let each be a fort

To hold unto the last. Fight to the end:
We 'll find our winning there. They are hard hit:
Another blow like that and they will break
And never try the ford. Here they come on."
There in wide circling lines the skirmishers
Creep down the slope; from every vantage send
Their shot upon the town, and back of them,
Now all afoot, the main line of the host,
Wary from hard-learned lesson. Still they 're far,
Mere flecks and fringes on the fields; but see,
They feel the nip, for here and there a fleck
Drops as a marksman's rifle rings, to bide
As on his fellows go, unshaken on,
Swift rushing in the open, with scant pause
In sheltering coverts while they send their fire,
As if a great wind blew them to their death.
Now stumbling o'er their dead they win the street,
Break in the doors to find rude welcome there
From shot and steel. Swift are the portals blocked
By those who fall, while from the windows hurled
To smite the surging throng come shapes of men,
The dead of friend and foe. Their leader sees
He 's spending all in vain save for the help
That Satan lends him in the ready torch.
Yea, he would spare that woe, for in his heart
Stays true man's tenderness for worthy foe
No rage of battle downs. But he knows well
His hard task is to win; to find ally
If needs from deepest Hell. "Quick with the fire!"

He calls unto his men: "Burn every house,
So they will have to face us."
Why so far,
Grim master, went ye seeking nether Hell
Down the vast circlings of deep buried ways
That never know the sun, when in the light
Of harvest morn, wherever harvests wait,
That shame burns 'fore men's eyes; when every year
That rounds with sickle, binds within its sheaves
A sorer tale of woe than thou canst paint
With all Hell's scorch upon thee — with thy pen
Dipped in its burning lime? Behold this scene,
All ye who would know torment. There's a town,
Each house a temple built with toil and hope,
Roaring in flame, and they, the ministers,
The mothers, fathers, children, old, and babes,
Who tended altars for the eternal God,
Smote by the Devil's hosts — their fellow men.
Why shame earth's ordered depths with phantasies
Limned from the Hell that liveth but in man?
Why picture Satan in that far abyss,
When thou dost know him throned within thy heart
So soon the Christ is spurned? Poor fool, poor fool!
Leave fancied deeps and painted realms of woe,
Scorch eyes and soul right here. See 'mid that flame
The fleeing women hugging babes to breast,
Or bending o'er their lovers for a word
Ere word can come no more from closing deep;
Sore wounded men, who spend the last of life

In one more slaying stroke. Hear that wild cry
Of those 'neath burning rafters, prisoned there,
Singed with the flame, yet roaring forth their joy
Whene'er their rifles slay.
Hast thou yet eyes
And soul unscorched to look, know then thou art
Thyself the Satan. For, alas! we know
That men may do his work and yet be men
When the dear Christ comes back; but he who looks
Unblinded on it is the lonely one,
The lord of shame.
Still turn once more, behold,
When day smites through this night, in shape of man
Scarred, blackened, bleeding by the demon's work,
Who stumbling creeps through ruin of his house
Lapped by the eager flame, yet bearing out
A stricken foeman, lays him tenderly
Upon the reddened sward and vainly strives
To stay the life-tide; when the last sob comes,
Straightens the limbs and covers up the face,
Leaving the youth to sleep: then weary-eyed
Sets him again to slaughter.
Now send eyes
Once more into that night and its hard flame,
See there a home such as the morn looks on
And knows wherefor it comes to light this world:
A little house girt in by autumn flowers
That waited frost in patient loveliness,
Sure of their errand done, — for they 've been fair, —

With might of man and woman's tenderness,
Dear joy of cradle and dear hope past death,
Crowning its roof-tree. Ere upon it rolls
That lava tide of war to shrivel up
All that hath made it temple of the Lord,
There by that window see the youth who rode
In that long, long ago of yester eve,
With heart of boy to bear the load of man;
Swift, hard-faced, grim as ever brutal fate
Shaped instrument for slaying; yea, a child,
Yet with war's hell in heart. Hear thence the ring
Of shot on shot and mark how his strokes tell,
However far the aim. Now the smote foe
Find whence that smiting — hurl upon the house
And swift break way within. And there 's a cry
That sobbing dies away — a cry of child
That fears the dark.
So on, forever on,
Amid the surging flame the battle sweeps.
The shouting dies away: there 's scant breath left
For silent grapple and the stroke that slays.
Yea, it is still save for the roaring flame,
The tread of hurrying feet, the hard-drawn sigh
Wherewith the life goes out; for all is spent
Of shot and powder, and their guns are clubbed
For what of stroke their weary hands can send.
See, there the living fall beside the dead
Spent in the fearful doing — like to die
And praying for their peace.

Hark! now there ring
Once more the foeman's bugles, keen and high,
Insensate shout of triumph. So hath brass
Adown the thousand years cried victory
To ears that hear not and to ears that hear,
Shouting the lie, "We've won!" — See now they come,
The sorry remnant of that noble host,
Creeping unto their standards, shrunk and wan,
Their souls borne down with shame for victory
Paid with that price, alike of friend and foe.
Ay, they are beaten, victors though they stand
Upon that field of shame, for in their hearts
The drums and trumpets wake no more the cry
For eager onward deeds. Their faces tell,
Grimed and tear-stained, the weariness of death
That dreams of peace afar by firesides
In light of kindred eyes. No more of war,
Of glory past yon ford — no more of earth,
Save in that silent place where men may rest
Waiting the angel's trump. Ay, they are men:
The demon is away. Their leader rides
Silent along the line; reading what's writ
In those bowed shapes he chose for veteran's work;
Reading in his own heart what's writ so plain
That every man hath read: that 'tis the end
Of all that wondrous vision; where a stroke
Straight to the heart should slay the ills of war
And win his people peace. Yet he must count
As does the trusty soldier; reckon well

With fate that stands afore him: of his men
A third are on the earth; of officers
There stand but three before him fit to lead
Those men unfit to follow. Then he asks,
"What of our ammunition is there left?"
The answer comes, "All 's spent; there 's not a round
Left in our pouches, and the enemy
Burnt his last cartridge 'fore we bore him down."
Now for a while that leader silent looks
Over the smouldering ruins to the hills
That lift beyond the river, in that morn
So crowned with hope — this eve with hope so far,
And in its place despair. He fronts a deep
Impassable, by beaten foemen delved,
Wherein his cause hath found its hapless grave.
Then longingly again to his men's eyes,
As if to find in them the will to share
In venture wild that shapes in his despair
To try with fate a leap into that gulf.
He sees but beaten men.
And now he turns
To where our Bradford kneels beside a man,
A stricken foeman, who hath life to save;
Looks long on him, with heart that by him kneels,
Then in bowed speech, "My doctor, you have won.
We are the beaten; though we keep our swords,
You have our hearts. With you we leave our dead,
Our wounded, knowing well that you will care
For them as for their brothers, once our foes."

The busy doctor answers with a nod,
With eyes still on his task. So came the end.
Once more cry out the bugles, and the lines
Unfold and roll them weary up the steep,
Down which they came with morning in their hearts.

The sun hies to its setting, wrapped in gold;
The river goes as it in morning went,
Bearing the tide of earth and faith of men
Forth to the waiting sea. Ay, myriad springs
From the far hills are blent within its tide
To know the light of day, the stars of night,
And then the eternal deep where sun and stars
Shine on forever. As they onward flow
By that untrodden ford there comes a rill,
New broken from the everlasting mounts,
To join its brothers on the way to sea,
And on all flow together, past our sight
To memory's deep.
                    Far, far away,
We hear those bugles as the marching host
Passeth into the night. Forever on
In hearts that strove with them to fatal goal,
Or stood against their might.
                              Now we are back
In that old blacksmith's shop with grimy walls,
Where scraps of iron hang on rusty nails,
Wait for their pennyworth of dirty use;
Floor rubbish-strewn, and windows with the dust

Of forty years upon them; cheap and drear
After the manner of the life of man
Lived on this earthy world. Again we see
Those five hard-visaged, bent old men,
The remnant of that mighty deed of long agone,
When for a day they with their comrades found
The might that dwells in men; looked once afar
Through the dark gate of death unto the realm
Where God lives on forever; then turned their eyes
Back to the commonplace and knew no more
The gateways of the soul; content to bide
So long they might within the simple house
Whose portals are the cradle and the grave,
With chimney place for altar. So we judge,
We who dwell in our palaces that look
Far o'er the deeps, and for our servitors
Have all the noble hosts of ages gone
To guide us on far ways; to bid our souls
Upon the gracious paths of fellowship
With all that 's pure and high.
All was not told
I'd journeyed far to hear, for yet I saw
There by my side the shade of him who stood
In noble substance two-score years ago
Near to my heart: as he would be assoiled
And to his rest, but waited till I heard
How came his passing. So I said to them
Who opened me the gates they looked not in,
"Tell me of Prentice. He was dear to me,

The dearer for the parting that had come
Before death sealed it." Then the sinner spoke,
His hard old face aglow: "Why, damn it, sir,
He was the darn'dest fighter of us all;
He led in every rush, smashed through our doors
Like a mad bull, and swept our people out.
He was the Devil's broom. But he fought fair,
With no mean tricks. I saw him lift a man,
One of our side, who 'd stumbled and was trod
Beneath their feet, set him upon his legs,
And cuff him to our line. He would not strike
A chap who could not face him. Many did
To take good whack in front. Oh, we tried hard
To down him, but the Devil helped him on,
And made our rifles popguns when we sought
To find his heart, and our stout bayonets
Broom-straws before his sword."
All that I knew
In knowing him; knew that it was as man
He did the Satan's work, with here and there
A glint from soul. So questioned I again
Of the dear sinner: "Tell me of the end;
Where was he slain and how?" And then all turned
Unto the ancient blacksmith, as they felt
'T was his to tell the story. For a while
He sadly looked away with half-closed eyes
And pinchèd face, as those who feel the glare
Of a hard flame; then gently said to me,
"He was your friend, I 'm sure you loved him well,

For never was a fairer youth than he
Or manlier in man's deeds. He came to death
Upon a landing in a burning house;
All who charged with him lay upon the stair
Wrapped in the flame, along with those who held
Against that brave assault; alone he came,
Sore wounded but a mighty soldier still,
Upon the master of the house, who was
The last of its defenders. There he fell,
Shot through the head. So soon as he was down
The master turned to fly, for time was scant
With fire all about; but back he came,
To listen at the heart of that brave foe.
Life was yet there, and so he bore him out,
Laid him upon the grass, and saw him die.
That night he made a coffin, washed the dead,
And buried him on slope of yonder hill
Beside his comrades and our brethren.
Two days thereafter, when the mother came,
He washed it once again and gave it her,
For she would take it home."
Then as I looked
On his averted face I read the rest.
He was the master of the house who told
The way that Prentice died. Dear simple art
To save his neighbour from the pain he 'd give
In saying, "Here 's the man who slew thy friend:"
Mayhap in part to spare himself the woe
Of opening once again the long-healed grave

Where he had earthed his dead. Ah, reasons vain;
It was his nature did it.
Ye who dwell
With all the noble hosts of vanished days
Match that man's doing from their storied deeds;
From out your palace windows see ye aught
That better shows how true hearts beat than this
Rude simple tale of valour and of faith,
That dwelt in that plain man?
Awhile none spoke,
For all our hearts were sore; but in the gleam
Of the December eve I saw the shade
That long had stood beside me fade away,
For now the noble story was all told
And his good peace was won.
The sun was set
Upon the last day of a hundred years
When forth I went along Augusta's street
From that strange parley with those five old men, —
Saw there such folk as I had known of old,
A weary rustic lot that made that name
So linked with ancient splendours seem a crown
Set on a beggar's head. Cæsars and Rome
And the vast memories of vanished days
Bide in that word. But when I looked again,
I saw the crown had 'neath it a new king:
The Roman knew not when the Tiber ran
By the Augustan city. That here stood
The citizen she dreamed of: plain, blunt man,

Content to dwell all simply in his fields,
But ever ready for hard duty's tasks
With plough or sword; who counted death as naught,
If commonwealth lived on. Ay, 't was well named,
This simple hamlet by the western stream,
For there men judged right well 't was fit to die
And went as men to death; they did brave deeds
And then were still.

CUMBERLAND GAP

'T is in a far-off summer day,
By a mountain pass that 's as far away
From our life all busied in little deeds,
With its languid hungers and trifling greeds,
As is that ancient summer day.

Far time and place, — yet far place and time
Lend them well to the lover's rhyme,
If there and then was the work of men,
Done as men do it faithfully well,
With clear eyes that see to the promised lands,
God's trust in their hearts, His might in their hands
For all that them befell.

'T is a rugged host for a rude time's tasks,
Where the saints are few and the sinners many;
At his dirty booth the Devil asks
For such no more than his dirty penny.
Yet that old Satan knows well his wares,
For all the scorching that 's on their hides,
Are but his without and the Lord's within;
That spite of their blackness, their grime, and their sin,
Deep in their hearts His grace abides.

'T is on the path where the pioneers trod
A century gone when they followed the sun
Into the wilds, for else guides there were none, —
Save trust in their thews and trust in their God, —
Breaking their way straight on for their souls:
Slayers of woods and smiters of men.
Edge of the axe and tip of the spear
That hath hewn and smote for a thousand year
The way of our kind to its far-off goals.

So they of old won to Cumberland Gap,
Leaving a trail for their brothers to follow;
A nick in the range, as you see on the map,
With many a peak and many a hollow;
With one deep rent in its castled crest,
An open door to the unknown west.
Straight onward they went, those breakers of ways,
Hunting for gates of unconquerèd realms,
Seeking their kings, — yea, the task of earth's days
Is to build and to bide for the mastering men.
So the brave take it, and so it was done,
And all that fair land to the setting of sun
Was had for the asking of souls that dared ask
And questioned not fate how hard was their task;
But who set one foot forward and then set the other,
In the manner of men who know earth as a mother,
Trusting her bosom for nurture and sleep,
Clutching her gifts, and ready to keep
All of her giving by giving their all.

With sun in heaven
And good earth 'neath their feet, they built a realm
Founded so well that naught could o'erwhelm
Save the entombing sea of lust and greed
That surges round our firmest. Their fair seed,
Planted in trust, grows to good earth, and grows
An hundred-fold of yield.
A hundred years
They delved and planted, reaped their goodly fields,
Went trusting to their graves, bequeathed to sons
The task of staying what their fathers shaped,
With faith and might to face the dooming sea
Whene'er it burst upon them. Trusting well;
For here now stand their children, ranked in arms,
Looking upon the way their fathers trod,
Eastward from that fair portal whence those sires
Saw their vast empire dim and far away,
Yet near their conquering hearts — watching that deep
For ill that sweeps unto them. Looking far
Over the valley of the Tennessee —
A noble vale, so wide that range on range
Of shadowy mountains sleep within its fold,
And many a river singing to the sea
Glints in the sun as to and fro it sways
Through its broad meads, as it were loath to go
From all the fairness it had won from earth.
Now where those fathers found no sentinels
But stately ordered pines, no fortresses
Save for the craggy steeps that wind and rain

Are wont to carve in shape of ancient holds
As they would tell to man that earth was made
For sturdy battle 'gainst its ceaseless storms:
Behold great ramparts set with mighty guns
That silent wait, and grimly look afar
Whereto they may hurl death. There by them tread
The watchful sentries, scanning hill and vale
For what men wait in war. And far below
Cluster the tents and cabins of a host,
Three thousand men set there to hold that pass
'Gainst an embattled deep.
It is the morn:
Far in the east the day comes surging up
Over the noble peaks that frame the sky —
Vast mountains rude and stern; grim warriors,
Who ages on have faced forgotten seas
And hurled them from this land; yea, keeping well
Their ward of earth for man, until he came
To watch and care with them this heritage
To the eternal garner.
The sentinel
Upon yon waiting rampart treads his beat
With keen eyes set where in the glint of morn
He waits the front of swift on-coming war
Over this realm of peace. For well he knows
That from the Atlantic's shore it westward sweeps
Over that olden path the pioneers
Broke through the wilderness upon their way
To win their commonwealth. He watches well

In that hard manner of this villain man,
When flash from sky hath set his heart afire
With the old flame of war. See how he halts,
Brings musket to a ready, while he peers
To the far verge, where half-score miles away
There comes a twinkling, like the sun on waves,
Upon the mountain's crest. Naught else he sees,
No shape of man or horse; but all is told
In those swift flashes writ on far-off sky,
In glint of bayonets. So now he calls
The corporal of his guard, and swift the word
Goes on the ready ways of ordered hosts,
And in a trice the leader by him stands,
His hand above his eyes. A moment more,
At foot of hill down which the glintings flow
There leap up in the air thin jets of cloud
That curl as smoke from chimneys to the vault.
Then comes the answer, where that twinkling halts
Before our outposts. Still but smoke and gleam,
Even to eyes that Galileo armed
With sights of gods. Yea, men are little things,
Seen thus afar save for the mighty deeds
That bridge the empty spaces. Earth and time
Look else as atomies, all meaningless,
That find in voids fit place.
                                        Now it sweeps on,
That unseen might, 'whelming the few who hold
Hopeless against its coming save to tell
To foe what waits, to friends what cometh on,

Winning a little time for those swift needs
That press on siegèd men. The bugles flare,
The drums are whirring, and the couriers speed
Adown the ways to call far outposts home,
And swift ride forth five hundred chosen men
To stay their comrades in their fight for time. —

The laden wagons wrestle up the steep,
Filled high with provender for man and beast;
The herdsmen drive their cattle to near folds
Within the cannon's play, and wailing goes
Forth to the rear that train of misery,
The wounded, women, babes, that hie away
From hold that shuts its gates, to fight and starve
So long the Devil wills it. Axes ring,
Felling the trees across the open ways,
While ready torches fire each house and barn
So that the foe shall find a desert where
The sun looked down on plenty. Now 't is done,
The fortress set for siege, as o'er the ridge
Stray in our skirmishers. It seems a rout
Of scattered, beaten men who tumble back,
Scurrying o'er fields and hedgerows in their plight,
Now fleeing swift, now halting for hard fight
Where two or three find chance, now striving on
Where swiftly gathered scores, with charge sent home,
Break through the on-coming line. So, stroke on stroke,
That ordered rout the bravest work of war
In the good vanguard fights, where every blow

All hopeless for near winning 's struck for faith
To brothers that it spares. Now a brave gun
Perched high upon our hold with mouth to sky
Bays out wild welcome, while from its hot breath
Sweeps mile up in the air a hurtling shell,
Swinging as hawk upon the victor's host,
That startled waits its stoop. And now the scream
Of Satan, who bestrode it in the charge,
Turns to victorious roar as swift it rends
A path through that dun host; so wide we see
Adown it as a street. But one stroke daunts
Even the bravest when it hurls from sky:
So valour has no answer. In troop our men —
Save those who dot the wayside of those miles —
Beaten but stout of heart, for they have done
The rear-guard's task right well — had good receipt
For all their spending in the time they won,
And token of it in the shout that hails
Their coming to the fold.
The halted foes
Seek lodgement by the river where the hills
Give shelter from our guns, in camps arrayed
Beside their planted banners. 'T is swift done,
For they are tentless, and they need but room
To lay their weariness by that pure stream
That washes ills away; to build their fires
And by their side find home. Awhile the host
Waits 'twixt the acts. The leader with his train
Of ready aides from yonder hill-top scans

The wall that lies before him — wall of hearts
That crests that mountain steep. Searches right well,
As is the soldier's part, to probe the earth
For hidden treasure in some chance to win
His way unto the goal. Soon forth he sends
The keen-eyed scouts to creep by twos and threes
Through fields and forests, seeking for fit place
Wherein to try surprise. Wide circling round,
They close upon the fortress but to find
Each nook and cranny with its sure defence;
They know the warders' hail in well-aimed shot
Of purpose wild, to halt and not to slay;
For the true soldier knows the comrade still
When he must count the foe. They take the quirk
Of many an outpost: "Ho, Johnny, we are here
And hungry for you. Get out or come in,
We're tired of your fooling." Steeps look plumb
When half a mile up fellow veterans crouch
In grinning patience, waiting till you come,
What's left unrent by cannon, blown and spent
For last hard greeting at the rifle's mouth,
Or spit of bayonet that hurls a chap
A ragged bundle down the way he came.
So through the day and night they do their part,
That better than the battle tells the skill
Of warring wits that play the ancient game
With move and check until there comes a mate,
And the great board is cleared for ventures new
With other gambits. So upon the morn

The wary foemen, judging well their part,
Sway to the west, — break through the ways that lead
On to the north, leaving our fortress blocked
By force to hold it sieged until it starves
Unto its rendering.
Ye who would find
How dear to heart are hearts of fellow men
We dumbly know are beating next our own, —
Thumping response when our own pulses quick,
Each knit to other, brave for this hard world
In comrades' deeds, — go set ye in a hold
That yesterday was firm linked with a realm
In common action as the body's parts;
To-day cast in the void as some far isle
Tramped round by sieging waves, with never sail
To give a glint of hope.
Slow wore away
The weary months where morn and noon and eve
And all the nights we listened to that void
For distant shot, for roll of drums, or cry
Of far-off bugle telling comrades came
To break our prison; but it stayed all dumb,
As if the deep had won again the realm
That once knew men. 'T was all in vain we tried
By morning foray or by night surprise
To break that wall of silence, for the foe
Hurled back the living remnants of our scouts
Who crept in darkness forth with hope to slip
Into the night away. No token came

Save ring of watchful rifles, or the cry
Of hopeless valour wrestling to brave death.
So on and on, until one midnight time,
When earth and heaven back to chaos went
In the wild ravage of a mighty storm
That cowed stout hearts and blinded wariest eyes
With flame and thunder, so that miracles
Seemed fittest happenings, our outposts found
Dropped in their midst, or by the lightning sent,
Shape of a man as men are shaped who've fought
What earth and sky may send to beat them down
With the true hero's might to bear them up
Unto the goal where they may fitly die
With good priest faith to shrive them. There he lay,
Shot through and nigh to death, naked, and torn
By thorn and thickets where he'd dragged his wounds
Through the beleaguering lines, — a mountaineer,
Who fought and won his fight because he knew
In his true warrior heart we hopeless starved
Because we idly hoped when brave despair
Should send us on as men. His life went out
With his brief story, telling how the foe
Had swept our hosts in ruin to the north,
Until from Alabama to the shore
Of the Ohio none held front 'fore him;
That Buell's army in the wilds was lost —
Lost even as were we to hope of all
Who mustered swiftly for a last array:
That gleaning of shorn fields that gathers all

Of man's shape fit to set as hope forlorn
In battle where lads fight because they 're men,
In knowing death is better than life shamed
By living overlong. By lightning's flash
We saw peace come to him, and read it clear
In the scant rags that clung about his limbs,
He 'd borne our arms before he brought to us
That message from the dark.
The storm was by,
And glorious morning swept up o'er the hills
Bearing the valour of immortal sun
As we laid in the earth that messenger
Whose word lived in our hearts; to lead us far
O'er the vast wilderness, where brothers true
Faced ruin for the lack of men here scotched
As rats in hole. Once more we nosed our cage,
Tried every way, to find our jailers there
Well fed and merry, scoffing at our ghosts
That dared to face them. Then we crept about,
Picked over bone-heaps for some shred that 'scaped
Hunger of yesterday; stewed haversacks,
And searched our pockets for the chance of crumbs
To eke out one more day; heard from the foe
A mighty shouting, telling us once more
Of victories they hailed. Yea, we were low,
Of earth's forlornest, who wait patiently
The doom writ in the sky; set in the stars
That shape brave messages for happy men.
Then came the master's hand, the brave, strong hand

That wins strange might from trial, smiting hard
When all of life seems out. He who had been
For all the weary siege but ruler set
To watch and chide; to hunger too and grin,
So that he shamed the weaklings when they drooped.
The "old man" of our camp-fires, silent, grim,
Much feared but little loved, stood forth the Lord
To break our prison bars and let the day
Into our hearts.
The drums had beat tattoo,
When from his tent went forth the orderlies
Swift through the camp with word for all our men
To make them ready forth to march ere day.
To march, yea, willingly, straight to the sky
Or straight away to Hell; but how to fare
As else than ghosts along those well-blocked ways,
No living man could guess. Yet quick we came
With shouldered packs that made us glad to lean
Each 'gainst the other, for we were starved men
And bent beneath our burthens: sadder lot
Ne'er gathered neath the moon. Lo, there he stood,
Our sometime "old man," now our very Lord,
With that upon him to bid heads lift up
And quaking legs stay firm. Then came the word
Straight to our hearts, "We march on to the north;
They hold the roads; we 'll hew ours through the woods
Straight to our brothers, or we 'll leave our bones
Where they will show men marched." Oh, what a shout
Rang from that peak and far down in the vale,

So that our foes from sleep sprang to their arms,
Deeming the sky was on them. Then we swung —
The men of months ago, stout veterans,
The ghosts all left behind — adown that steep
And straight into the forest. First there went
The van of hundred axemen, felling swift,
So that the way was opened as we marched
Slow onward save in heart, for with us went
Our sick and wounded and our batteries
Drawn by starved horses, poor dumb beasts who knew
But service only, naught of that which stuffed
Our empty hides with might and sent us on
With breath to toil and shout, "Forth, straight away!"
The axes rang before us; crashing went
To right and left the trees. Upon the rear
A host of other axemen closed the path
With skilful felling; so contrived the boughs
Laced in a tangle where each branch was knit
So to its fellows that the barrier
Was tight as beaver dam, and each bent twig
Ready at touch to smite as well-swung flail
Whoever stirred it. Thus we were islanded
In that great sea of woods as far and safe
From our hard jailers as though ocean wrapped
Upon uncharted isle. Afar we heard
The drum-beat and the bugle call to arms
In all our foemen's camps, and roared our joy
At the wild questioning of the hubbub raised
By Yank and devil in the far-off wood.

We knew him swift as Satan, knew he 'd spring
Upon our outposts, find there emptiness,
And then, suspecting ambush, wary creep
Unto that silent hold. Then as we climbed
Up the long reaches of the wood-clad hill
And won its summit with our slow-hewn way,
We looked off to that fortress, lone and still,
Where we had worn our hearts out. O'er its crest
The fulling moon went down, and in the east
Drave up the first of day. Good day to eyes
That long had seen him glower through the bars
Of that hard prison, mocking as he came
With his free sweep to circle round the world.
Yea, we now hailed him freemen once again,
Free in God's wilderness to starve and die
On a brave quest for graves. All held them still
And looked back waitingly, as those who watch
For wonder from the dark. Then as we gazed
And listened in that silence, far we heard
The clamour of our foes who hastened on
To seize that hold and search its mystery,
The tap of marching drums, the trumpets' cry
To columns closing in, and then the thing
That waited in the night. First bayed a gun,
Sprung with its overcharge to bits in air;
Then swiftly all its mates leapt to the sky,
To fall as thunderbolts amid the flame
That licked our tents and barracks, leaping up
As it would fire the vault. Now came the stroke

For which the rest was prelude, came with roar,
Heaving the earth to sky and hurling far
Into the night the ruin of that hold.
A moment and 't was dark; then scattered brands,
Fanned to swift burning by the wind that swept
Into that tumult, bore to woods and fields
A tide of flame. Long stood we there and looked,
But silently, for none had heart to hail
Our ally Death, though well he smote for us,
Sending us safety in that mighty stroke.
Then rang again the axes down the slope
On other side of hill; our way breaks on,
Marked by the trees that totter, lean, and crash
To right and left, leaving a rift where crept,
As in a roofless cavern far from sun,
The thin blue line that flowed down hill and up
Over the mountain torrents, round the crags
That sit as ancient ramparts on the crests, —
A monstrous serpent, with each scale a man,
That worms its way o'er earth with many a turn,
But ever towards the north star — animate
With strange compulsion that bids it go forth,
Starved, hopeless, toiling on its unseen quest.

The eyes that look to earth from starry realms
For all they know of deeds that we know not —
Deeds marvellous and strange — see none so far
From shape of ordered spheres as they behold
In this wild march. There on the east and west

Lie open wide fair ways that lead straight on
Whereto that thing would go, and yet it gnaws
Its burrow by their side; and stranger yet,
Upon those open paths there, writhing on
Like scalèd serpents, they two striving north
But swifter on the ways. Often they turn
Upon a cross-road, seeking for the path
Rent by the kindred shape on through the wood,
And when they find it, there a tumult wakes
'Mid smoke and flame. But straight upon its course
Sweeps the blue serpent, cleaving through the grey
To lodge it once again within the wild,
Leaving the cloven to reshape and crawl
Back to the open fields. — Oh, ye who look
Upon this troubled bit of whirling down
From isles of peace afar, know ye that here
Ye see of all God's realm arch mystery?
For these contending serpents are men shaped,
As they believe, in fashion of Himself,
And set in His creation for His work.
Those glittering snakes are armies, and each scale
Is that Lord's image striving till it dies
To slay its fellow shape; and as it falls
Back to the earth that bore it, forth there comes
Another to its place. Yea, ye are far,
But sure ye burn with us when ye behold
Dear men chained in these serpents, creeping on
As in a living prison, pray in vain
Unto the might that rules us that He slay

These time out-during demons. Ye ministers
Who serve Him as we would, cry we are here
In this forgotten atom of His realm,
Knowing of day but biding in the dark;
Cry that He save, or smite us to the deep,
That we be shamed no more.
                                        The morning came
As toiling axemen clove our way to vale,
Wherein a brooklet spreading from the hills
Dwelt 'mid broad meadows, glad to tarry there
Where first it knew of man, to lave his limbs
Ere he is cradled, ere he goes to earth,
To hear his children prattle, light his toil,
And bear his hope unto the unknown sea.
There in that mountain fastness dwelt a folk
By ages parted from the ways of men,
Knowing but rumour of the wondrous tides
Of life that sweep the world, of all its deeps.
They had but sky above and earth beneath,
And Death the great abyss, yea, and their souls
That knit them all in one. In them they ranged
As others on wide seas, brought fancies back
Wherewith to deck their simple cabined lives —
Gauds very like to those that Ormus sends
From its great marts, or Ind, to venturer
Pays for his far emprise. The deeps are like
In all their noble yield of pearl and gold
That guerds the farer's toil. Each year they sent
Over the eastern pass a caravan

Of shaggy mountain bulls that bore away
Their store of feathers, beeswax, and the "sang"
That goes to far Cathay; and in good time
The beasts came bellowing home beneath their loads
Of precious things and strange, but strangest yet
The sense of far away that came with them,
As breath of Araby in ship that fares
Thence to our western land. Then for a year
Their lives drew back into that little place
Girt in by hills and woods, lit by the sun,
By neighbours' eyes, and stars. — Afar they heard
The roaring of the mighty beast that came
Trampling the forest down, and forth they went
To give it battle, fearful though it seemed
Even afar, for war was in those hearts
That had not known its lines for hundred years:
The eager greed for smiting who comes on —
Or fellow man or Satan, yea, or Lord,
Who fits not to their fancy in his deeds.
On came their valiant host, full half a score,
Shock-headed, barefoot, eager for the fray
Until they saw us starved and battered men
In a hard fight for life. Then they were friends,
Eager to serve us as before to slay;
Helped drag our cannon; led us to their homes,
And bade us welcome with no questioning
Save of our needs. For now their fear was by
At sight of neighbours from some far away
Who'd fallen by their doors. They gave their all

From scanty larders, store of corn in barns,
Their cattle, fowls, and pigs; sent messengers
To claim the help of kinsmen in their task
Of succouring a host. Did once again
The noble miracle by Judah's sea,
Where those scant loaves and fishes fed mankind
For all the ages on, for they were given
By Him who showed all deserts plentiful
To those who will to give.
While the men
Swept far the land to fill our empty maws,
The mothers cared our wounded with that skill
Bred of the wilderness, in homely ways
That passes craft of surgeon, for it hath
The ancient healing touch of woman's hand
To bring the life back in the homesick man
With memory of mother, or let forth
His willing soul in peace.
But yesterday
We were as beasts hunted unto our lair,
Where we had turned at bay, and fellow man
Save for the foe was dead. Now here we lay
Beside a brook that sung as is the wont
Of helpful streams upon their way to sea;
With the good Lord who seemed so hopeless far
Undoing hurts with those dear neighbours' hands
That change this earth to heaven. Our worn frames,
Weak from long caging, wearied by hard toil,
Fled for a respite from the task before.

So 't was the morrow morning ere we marched,
Healed of our torment, for that friendly day
Had made hard yesterdays of no account,
Once more to battle with the wilderness.
We had in us the hearts of men who know
Again this world is fair. We went not lone,
For many of those neighbours marched with us;
They little questioned of our quest, or cared
What we were fighting for, but in their ears
Our drums and trumpets waked numb memories
Of unremembered days wherein their sires
Had war trod in their souls. Cowpens and Yorktown,
Dunbar and Worcester, Cressy and Poitiers —
And back unto the dark to that far time
When first the brute waxed man and felt his might
In onward surging war-line. So their legs
Wagged them with us by instinct, as the babe
Draws mother's breast, because it is the way
Good Mother Earth has taught in her dame's school
She 's kept these ages; where her tasks well learned
Are paid with kingdoms, honours, all her gold,
Forgetfulness with death.
We swifter fared
With those keen guides in front who knew their land
As lions know the fields wherein they range.
The giants of the forest bowed them down
At ring of their swift axes; 't was a sight
To see the flakes leap far at every stroke
As if they 'd waited for the chance to fly,

And might that had defied a thousand storms
Slip to the earth at touch of mastering hand
That dared to smite right on. Where peril lay
There in our front, that night of all unknowns,
They searched it out, slipped through the tangled ways
As wild beasts with the ken of things unseen
But wondrously discerned. 'T was now straight on,
With never backward step from balking cliffs
Or deeps impassable, but by the ways
The pioneer knows well, up beds of brooks
Where winter's floods had cloven through the crags,
Over broad meadows where the beavers built
Their mouldering dams, where wreckage from the hills
Stayed on its way to sea, o'er table-lands
In the high air, home of sky-loving pines
That kept their shadowed floors as temples clean
And silent at our footfalls, yea, that stilled
The clamour of our men so they crept on
As in some vast cathedral where they felt
The Lord was near. In that good pilotage
We swam beneath that endless roof of boughs,
Steering our way to shore, and in each eve
Sought those vast porches where the soaring cliffs
O'erhung their fretted bases, finding there
Strange altars, chapels in those ancient fanes
Shaped for some faith that never came to be,
All decked for worship in the peace that dwelt
Forever with them. So we went dreaming on
In idle drowse that numbs the wits of men

Who starve but strive right on. Dreaming we stood
Each morn beside the grave wherein we earthed
Brothers who 'd earned their rest, and dreamingly
Heard the far call of bugle tell the foe
Had found some by-way to us, once again
To set across our path, and then we woke
For a swift doing while the forest rang
With the high bell notes of our guides' sure guns,
Whose every stroke bore death, and the hard slam
Of well-aimed volleys, or the fierce hurrah
Of charge that rent the foe. 'T was swiftly done.
Our men, starved nigh to earth, found strength to smite
For chance of haversacks of those they slew,—
The half alive are fearful when they call
On what abides in men when nigh to death
And hungering for peace,—then dreamed once more
Beside a wider grave wherein we laid
Those who had paid the price.
Yet there were days—
Oases in that desert wide of days—
When we knew morn and noon and eve once more,
For our good pilots, steering deviously,
Found here and there a little place of homes,
Each with its welcome, when our drowsy wits
Were wondering who should open earth for us
The morrow morn. And then we tried to set
Our tatters into shape, tied up our rags,
And lowered knapsacks so they 'd cover up
Our ragged breeches, stepped with sore feet forth

To the sad tune our stumbling drummers beat,
Or broken-winded buglers tried to find.
Once more Elysian Fields with meat and drink,
Scant, but enough to change our ghosts to men;
Once more a sight of world that knew of homes,
Of women's voices sorrowing for our plight,
And shout of sturdy men who hailed us friends,
Who fared forth with us when reluctant on
We smote again the wood. Then for a while,
Before we waned to spectres, we were gay
With songs that lightened toil, with quirk and chaff
To spur a drowsy wight that maundering went
In day-dream of his home so hopeless far,
And whack to send him waking to his task.
Then each felt neighbour's burthen as his own
And shared it as he could.
All that was by,
And now we went as phantoms silently,
Each shut within himself with eyes to earth,
That once rich earth, now with but place for feet
And for wild hunger. There are many ways
By which the ancient brute sealed deep in man
Breaks back to day, but none so swift as that
He finds when famished. Look into those eyes
Where shone the light of mercy, love, and faith,
The noble stars of sky, now lit with glare
Ye see in ravined wolves. Yea, 't is a sight
To see those limp and faltering shapes of men
Leap tiger-like upon a horse that falls;

In their wild fury stripping its lean bones
Before the life is out. And as they gorge,
See how above us wheel across the sky
The watching vultures, as they knew the end
Of all our striving.
                    Spare us, Thou good Lord,
War, pestilence, and famine; for they cast
Thy shape back to the beasts, slay all Thy care
That through the weary ages stored in him
The wondrous harvest of his agony
From errings infinite, that makes him man,
The heir of life.
                  In such a song as this
There comes a time when singer should go swift,
Else is his lay too sad for hearts of men,
And not good solace, as all songs should be:
So let our spectres grope on to the end
Of their sore travail, till upon a morn,
Far in the north they hear the cannon boom, —
Not the sharp yelp of field guns, but the bay
Of the huge war dogs caged on fortress wall
Or kennelled on stout ships, — and so they know
Their striving near its goal; beside those guns
They know their banner flies above stout men
Who are their brethren. They listen long
To make it sure that trouble of the air
And quake of earth is no mere phantasy
Bred of their weariness, — one more day-dream
Of vagrant hope; but as the gentle wind

Swings from the north, the dullest ears know well
It is the roar of guns. And now a cheer,
A quavering shout but brave, goes to the sky,
As might from out a spectral host that wins,
Beaten yet victors, to the further shore,
Where they may lay them, knowing they have done
Their part as men. Now all their strength is out, —
The might that bore them disembodied on,
Faithful, in that sore tasking, — and they fall
In utter weariness, to lie as on the field
Where lie the dead, heaped as they go
Upon the earth; here pillowed on the breast
Of one who went before; there stark and lone
With closed eyes turned to sky. The sun climbs up,
Waking the world; but those he marshalled on
In their hard tasking sleep as children sleep
'Neath roof-tree's shelter, for they know that there,
Down in the vale, are brothers who fight on;
That whate'er may be lost, the good cause lives
And waits their waking.
Now the bugles sing
As larks that climb the sky, and forth the drums
Send their wild heart-beats, waking dullest ears
That know the stir of earth. Up leap those shades,
Those withered shapes of men, gaunt but now strong!
From brave dreams to a waking for brave deeds
Swift they are ranked, and swift they stride away
Down the long slope that leadeth from the hills
To the Ohio's shore. The unhorsed guns

They 've dragged a hundred miles with four-score men
Yoked to each harness, tugging ceaseless on
At the heart-breaking toil, seem light as sleds
That boys drag o'er the snow — as if they too
Lifted their brazen hearts to hail the deeds
The morrow brings to them.
Ye who have read,
After brave Xenophon, how Spartan host,
Long wandered, hopeless save for Spartan hope,
Shouted at sight of sea, — of sea that blessed
With chance of battles new, — and hear that cry
Of kindred fate and hearts, from land and time
So far no Grecian dreamed them, hailing gleam
Of the Ohio's wave, — know strangely near
Are knit all ages by the deeds of men:
How "Thalatta" e'er rings on hard-marched ways
That lead from lonely peril to the touch
Of kindred helping hands.
Now they have won.
That sheltering wood 's behind, and 'fore them lies
The day of open fields. There in the stream
A fleet of gunboats that had swept away
The foe that watched their coming. Yea, 't is home;
Their nation's roof-tree 's o'er them, and the might
Of brothers by their side.
I see them now,
How shadowy, gaunt, and old, as there they lay,
None seeming less than threescore, — as the dead
Made ready for the pit, while o'er them bend

Their helpers good, so strangely young and stout,
Lifting each spectre for his food and drink,
Then laying him to sleep. So for a time
These whilom men were infants; newly born
Back to the life they left on that hard road;
Back swiftly to the strong men that they were
Before their jailing and their wild escape
Into the night away.
Here is the end
Of that brave fight for life and that which lives
Beyond the battled lines. Yea, 't is the end,
As valiant deed is ended when the veil
Thick woven of the years shuts to our eyes
The men who shaped it. When the curtain drops,
The tragedy is ended, and we forth
To seek the stars and air, and care no more
For heroes dead or living, for the time
To tell their story 's by, and they are dead
So soon the story 's told. But count it not
That all is done when curtain falls; for Time
With his immortal servants is behind,
Shaping the stage for other tragedies.
New actors con new parts they are to play,
And the old pictures of earth's vales and hills
Will hail those living as they hailed our dead;
For dead and living are alike their own.

THE RESCUE MARCH

Dawn comes where sleeps a host awaiting day
To bid it forth to deeds. Far in the east
The ushering star grows dim, and all the world
Knoweth its splendour near: so hosts have slept
The weariness of yesterdays away
These weary ages, dreaming of God's peace,
To wake for Satan's war.
On yonder hill,
Lined 'gainst the blackened west, the leader stays,
The master of those legions, on his horse,
Leaning unto the darkness, reckoning for
What cometh o'er the vale of Tennessee
Where night abideth yet — a sentinel,
Whose task it is to peer into the night
With heart for what night sends. His face is still,
But in his eyes there is the light that shines
Adown all ages' midnights, finding ways
Where valour's feet may tread — the Cæsar look
That shrinks the ample spaces of this world
Unto the stage where man may play his part
And baffle destiny. Out of the west,
Past the linked arches of the earth and sky,
We hear the throbbing of the far-off guns,
Now as a tremor of all earth and air,
Now as a whisper, now a pulsing roar,
As night winds tell the raging of far seas.

Awhile the leader hearkens. Then he becks
An aide who waits; gives orders that are borne
So swift as horse may leap. Then looks away
Over the slumbrous camp, where 'neath the tents,
Grimed with the mire of many a hard-fought field,
Sleeps the brave host that waits his word to do
Hard task for soul and thews. Then as he goes
Adown the hill, he hears his message ring:
"Up and away, up and away!"
Sing out the bugles, whir out the drums,
"Quick to your baiting, Johnnies are waiting."

With the swift magic of the soldier's craft
The tented fields are bared, the cannon horsed,
And to their banners flock the burthened men,
Each with half-hundred weight upon his back —
What he hath of earth's goods, and what of ills
Wherewith to slay his neighbours. Ye who know
The tricked-off soldier of gay holidays
Will seek him vainly in such veteran hosts
That tread the ways of war. Behold him there,
The ancient man of arms, who hath trod on
Out of the primal night in search of day
That dawns within his heart. Bent 'neath his load,
A burthened, dirty peddler, forth to vend
His hard pelf o'er the world. Bright arms and eyes
And step that tells of might hid in that heap:
All else is sordid, foul, as men may be
With the clean life of true men 'neath their hides.

Look down those serried ranks, and see thy folk
The masters of this world. Yea, they are grim,
As they had looked within the gates of Hell
And knew its scorching still. Yet in them bides
The heart of men sent on from sire to son,
The grace of God from mothers who them bore
To keep this world from shame.
Long ere the sun
Fires the tree-tops on the waiting hills,
These ordered legions, thirty thousand strong,
Are ready for the word that sends them on
Wherever it may bid, and now their chief
Giveth the message, — message that hath wings,
Cleaving straight to their hearts, "Hear ye, my men!
Beyond the river, forty miles away,
Our brothers are in battle with the foe,
Who smites with twice their force. Valour will hold
Until the sun has set; but in the morn
We stand where they have stood or we are damned,
For that good fight is lost. On to your work!"
Then out that host there sweeps a mighty cheer
From men who hail their tasking as the Lord
Had opened wide His gates and bade them in;
Yea, in that surging cry we know their hearts
Are where their feet shall stay before the morn,
When all those burning miles are trodden down.
We hear not in that roar the devil's note,
That rings o'er reddened fields for victory,
But that from high, to tell the souls of men

Have might to stay the brother. On they swing
A-roaring to the wood, and from its depth
Far ring the echoing cheers — and now the field
Where myriads dwelt the night is lone and still.

Ye who in fancy see war's splendour gleam,
From battle's front have never seen the might
Of men who hurled them o'er the earth away
Upon a rescue march. Yea, all the deeds
Of noblest legions on the hardest field
Have Satan in them; but this march to save
Is as the warring with the dooming sea
Of those who fight for shipwrecked — for the Lord.
So are the dirty ways of war sublimed
By those who march to save.
On rolls the host,
Steadfast as river forth into the sea,
A mighty living tide that breasts the hills
And roars adown the valleys, breaking ways
Wherever earth may hinder. On, straight on,
As hurls the avalanche that knows its path
From the vast might that sways it.
While the morn
Lightens their hearts, they tread to beat of songs,
Wild catches shaped by camp-fires to old tunes
That fit to plodding feet — those roundelays
That vanish with the dust wherever hosts
Tread on the paths of war; with quirk and gibe
And boyish antics like a troop from school;

With never note of what flames in their souls
To hurl them on their way. They 've that strange shame
That bids true hearts go hide nobility
Beneath the ragged cloak of vulgar phrase;
Yet through its tatters shines the shape within
To eyes that know the trick. Yea, each one sees
The image of his brother fighting on
For God and land, like blazing cross in sky,
As forth they to it willing as their Christ.
They know the splendour of their task; they told
How well they knew it in the roar that hailed
Hard toil and death for goal. Yet now they howl
Like monkeys on a frolic. Yea, such men
Puzzle the wits of those who see their masks
And naught of what they hide, who know not how
Man 's shaped as is the realm where meanest things
Cloak the majestic, so that we may tread
Beside the Lord unblinded. Hear that song:

"Trudging away, Hell is to pay,
The old man is in for it, so trudge away.
Ho there, you Johnnies! Yankees are coming!
Get up and git, for the hornets are humming;
Don't try to stay,— Buell 's away,—
The old man is after you, Hell is to pay!

"Old John Brown had one little Indian,
Two little, three little, four little Indian,
Five little, six little, heap little Indian,

Smart little Indian boys.
Old John's body lies a-mouldering in his grave,
But his boys are marching on.
Glory, glory, halleluja! glory, glory, halleluja!
For his boys are marching on!"

Now comes high noon.
The spring of morn is past — they shout no more,
But bend them to their toil, with but a word
Of cheer to wearied neighbour, or a whack
To start his slowing blood. At frequent streams,
Chill with the winter's snows, a horseman tries
The surging waters, — finds where men may fight
Waist-deep, each helping other, past the ford.
Now plunging in, they wrestle with the flood
That heaps above the throng and tugs and whirls;
So here and there a man is swept away
To wrestle with the torrent, — 'hap to shore,
Or 'hap to find another path so deep
That leads to death. There is scant time to save
Whoso falls by the way, when men strive on
Unto a nation's saving. Yet see there
Where one is whirled away, a brigadier
Who cons his passing legion, turns his steed,
Leaps swift into the stream, and spurring hard,
Wins to the helpless, lifts him on his horse,
And swims beside him till the shore is won,
Roaring his curses on the hapless wight
Because his gun is lost. So on and on

The tide of life fights with those kindred streams
That part it from its purpose: man's hard fight
With brutal earth for chance to win his way
Unto nobility.
The ford is past,
And all the dripping legions swing away,
While mocking drums and bugles sing the call
Of "pease upon a trencher." With no halt
They munch their soakèd grub, the ancient hoard
Of grimy haversacks; their pork and bread
A gruesome mess that well-bred hounds would scorn —
The "three days' rations" that to veteran tells
Famine and fight to come. Days when his belt,
Drawn to the last notch, will not hold his legs
In shape for sturdy wagging. While they feed,
The weary horses strive to snatch their share
From boughs and sedge-tops. So, close knit as ship
That leaves no wake behind, go men and beasts;
With thirty thousand wills all shaped as one,
Bound by a mighty purpose, straight away
Toiling to horizon.
'T is now the time,
The leader knows, that peril of the march
May come upon his host; when souls and thews
Grow weary of hard striving and bow down;
When those who 've stood with no man at their back
Upon a broken line falter and fall
As dead beside the way. So now he rides
With rear-guard, watching for the sorry signs

That stout hearts break beneath the load they bear.
Still none lie down, and when, now here, now there,
Some stagger to the earth, stout neighbours lift
Their knapsacks on their own, and cuff them on.
So they 'scape shame. This world yet giants knows
Who in hard trials joy to help bowed men —
Shoulder their loads and trudge on as they found
Might in their double burthens — still have breath
To send a shout of welcome to the skies
For the brave tasking. There 's a Hercules,
A soldier from the woods of Michigan,
Who hath in him the axeman's nimble strength,
The hearts of myriad oaks, the grace of pines
That he hath slain. In him some Norseman old
Finds once again on earth his ancient way
To valiant plundering. Like Santa Claus,
Clad in his motley spoils, he tops the heap
With knapsack of a stripling by his side —
A raw recruit, poor lad, who finds the Lord
In that huge sinner. Yet as on he swings
Upon the way, he pipes as pipes the lark,
As if his only task were heralding
Of merry days. And those who hear his song
Straighten their backs, and are once more stout men
In soul and thews.
As on the rescue sweeps
From morn to eve, each mile the sullen roar
Of battle nearer comes, till cannon beats
Sharp music for the march. The setting sun

Is wrapped within the war cloud that rolls high
Over the sulphurous field. A mighty arch,
Lit by the pulsing flashes of the guns,
A score of miles away and yet so near
They quiver firm-set earth. Beneath that pall
That shuts out heaven, on the columns pass
As hosts that enter in the gates of Hell,
Leaving the breath of sky.
                                        'T is now deep night,
That time the leader fears when men no more
Take heart from all the cheering hosts of day,
But blindly stumble onward, faint of soul,
As if they groped o'er graves to find their own.
Yea, all the morning valour 's left behind,
Trod down in weary miles, and all that holds
Those bowed shapes to their task is faith of men.
Ye fancy proof of man comes on the fields
When dear life 's set for hazard. See ye here
Far sorer trial than where they front Death
That numbs their valour with his weariness,
Leaving but faith to face the agony,
Spurring them on unto far place to die.
Hear that vast smothered cry, the myriad moan,
Those prayers to God or Satan. See there youths,
The child still in their faces white and drawn,
Who sleep as on they stumble; dream of home,
Of mother, or of sweetheart; wake to know
Again their torment. See yon grizzled sire,
Still soldier good, for all his three-score years

That now weigh sorely, striving yet to stay
His son who totters by him; last of three
Who but a year ago strode forth with him
Seeking their people's safety.
So the host,
That vast creation of omnipotence
In soul-linked men, moans ever on and on
Upon its tortured way: as some vast brute,
Incarnate from the clods to do His work
Of rending earth or heaven, might surge on,
Bearing its load of woe to destined end,
Knowing but torment till its task was done,
In the lone joy of death. See there the men
Who in the day swept on in measured tread
That marks the veterans' going, keeps them free,
Onward to swing as ordered birds in air,
Are but a herd that crowds and sways and halts,
Here in wrestling throngs, there with spaces wide,
Past which in shambling run they win them on.
See in these jammings of the senseless mob,
At every halt, they sink upon the earth,
Heaped on each other: lying as the dead
Smote by volcanic blast. On them comrades
Stumble and fall until they block the path
As drift-wood bars a stream; and then the fight
Of all who lead to wake those dead to life,
Smite them afoot, and send them on their way
With kicks and cuffs and curses, whack of swords,
And prick of bayonets.

Thus through the night
Creeps on the column hurled forth on the morn,
Nigh unto death, but with the might that lives
When all of life is out, for faith bides still
And bids it on, yet on.
But now the wood,
That all the night hath wrapped them in its dark,
Hath light of dawn that once more pales the stars
In presence of new day; a dawn that wakes
No song in those bowed hearts. Oh, what a change
From those brave legions ready for the march
With Cæsar round the world, now bent and old
As they had trod with him the ages on
Since he was quenched in earth! What stuff for deeds
Is left within those ghosts, those once stout men,
Who hailed their cross when last swung up the sun?
Set them to bar defeat, to break the surge
Of victory that leaps unto its goal?
Nay, they are beaten, fit but for the graves
Whereto they stumble. So say ye who know
The outer shell of man, but not the seed
That hides within the husk; that waits to spring
Unto its wonder, at the mastering word.
He who hath conned that march and hour by hour
As miser reckoned spending, hears that word
Brought by hard-ridden aide who answers hail,
Sent yester morn by swiftest couriers.
"My general bids you know he is o'erwhelmed;
His lines are beaten back, and half his force

Hurled from the field and huddled by the stream.
He dares not hope your footmen win to him,
But asks you send your cavalry and guns
To cover his retreat." Then for a time
Our leader looks upon his down-bowed men —
That sullen stream that creeps unheeding on —
And forth into that war cloud, as he would
Make reckoning with fate. Then answer gives:
"Say to your general that we shall stand
To the last man where stood our brethren, there,
Before we see the sun."
The aide spurs hard,
For he bears hope to brighten that despair.
He hath the measure of that silent man
And knows he reckons well.
Hark! from the front
There comes a cheering, — weary and yet brave,
As dying men who find in victory
A life spring for their hearts. Yea, now they tread
Adown the slopes beside the Tennessee,
Nearby the boats that are to bear them o'er
Unto that smoke-enwrappèd field of Hell,
The goal of their far striving — place to stand
And give the Lord account. See them sweep on,
Once more a veteran host, with heart to snatch
Victory from Satan. Now with swift charge
They mount the boats, and with their willing might
Swift warp them o'er the stream. They have a cheer
From the cowed throng that skulks on further shore,

And from the myriad wounded who wait there
For surgeon's help or death, a quavering cry
Of shades that once were men: they send a roar,
A lusty echo of the shout that rang
The yesterday when forth they roaring went
Unto their task. Swift from the decks they spring,
Swift rank them 'neath their banners. Chafe to wait
The slower guns and ordering of march,
For each hath tide in heart that surges on
And curses halting feet. 'T is once again
The miracle of dead made live, good deeds
Where death may be well earned.
Now they are forth,
Cleaving that chaos as the north wind cleaves
The tangled wreck of storm; brushing aside
The throng of vagrants, wreckage of the lines
That Beauregard had smote; then carefully
Crowding against the hedgerows to give way
For those who bear the wounded; endless stream
That flows from 'neath yon burning pall of war,
With its grim harvest laden on their biers.
See there a mighty black with master borne
Upon his shoulders, as the shepherd bears
Lost sheep unto the fold. Hail, Carey Bell,
Dear, well-remembered giant! Thy swart hide
Wrapped as brave sinner as this world e'er knew;
To thee hard battle was a minstrel show.
On with thy burthen snatched from 'neath the feet
Of charging hosts and borne for weary miles —

Yea, on I see thee marching past the sky
With grin and quirk, but on thy back that load
To lift thine own of sin!
                                        Now all the line
Breaks to the double-quick, with hands o'er eyes
And faces turned away; for there 's the place
The surgeons set their tables yester morn
To toil through day and night. Look, if you dare
To face the sorest torment of this world;
Look not unless you could behold the Christ
As he wore out his stout life on the tree,
For here is once again that agony
Shrouding the everlasting in its night.
See those red altars for war's offering:
And by them faithful priests, clad in their robes
Once white as snow, now dyed with blood of man.
See how stern faced they are, hard as the steel
That in their tender hands rends limbs of men.
See there the bearers toss upon the board,
As porters heave their bales, a shapely lad
With death writ on his face. The surgeon's hand
Goes swiftly to the heart; then waves away
What 's past his help, unto the nearby field
Where lie his silent comrades, a great host
Waiting their graves. Another in his place,
Grey-bearded soldier, on his shoulder stars.
Now with deft stroke of knife his wounds are bared
And o'er him bends the surgeon. Swift the work,
For in a trice 't is done, and his legs cast

Upon the heap that 's grown since yester morn;
And forth he goes a remnant of a man,
Haply to creep unto some far-off grave,
Or happier to find it in the nearby field.
So on and on those hard-faced ply their trade.
Ye think them hard of heart? See one there lies
Who 's dropped the mask and sobs his life away
Beside the mortal wounded, that no skill
Can help save to the passing; smote in soul,
By agony he 's shared. No wound 's on him,
Yet there he dies of heart-break for that woe
Fought all the night in grim way of his kind
Who face, as men must, torment.
                                        Now from afar,
Beyond the wood that 'fended yesterday
This refuge from assail, the enemy
With nearer planted guns welcomes the dawn
With the wild music of his cannonade.
Swift through the throbbing air come hurtling shells,
Skimming above the tree-tops; stooping down
To send their torment 'mid this wreck of war
That here hath sought asyle. See there one sweeps,
A shrieking demon, eager for the chance
To do his master's bidding, with sure aim
Upon that altar. Yea, well is it done —
There 's rent earth where that place of mercy was,
All else hath vanished, save the faith that stays
In faithful hearts and hands. Swift as that stroke
The ruin 's mended. Other priests stand there,

White-robed and ready, as new-stricken come
Unto the new-built altar.
On with ye
So fast your weary legs may bear ye on
To what awaits ye in once blossomed fields,
Where tender eyes were opening to the sky
Trusting the Lord, to find they waited feet
Of maddened throngs to stamp them in the earth.
What doth await ye there is Satan's own,
What 's here hath strangely mingled Heaven and Hell,
Those warring infinites that rend our souls
And make an end of deeds.
They breast the hill,
Spurred on by what 's behind, and on they surge
Into a ruined world, a ravaged earth
Beat down by hurrying feet; past smouldering fires
Where vanished homes: past many a field where lie
The ragged flecks the bearers have laid down
Because the life was out; o'er broken arms,
Guns with rent wheels and mouths turned to the sky
As they would bay the heaven — now deep Hell,
Paved with the dead! the mingled friend and foe
Sealed in death's mystery. At first they seek to step
Over the corses, then they stumble on,
Cursing the hindrance, plucking here or there
Canteen or haversack. Thus sways the host
Unto its place of tasking. Now 't is there;
The bugles ring their message and it swings
To right and left, to stay where they have stood

O'er whom they stumbled on. Yea, 't is a sight
To lift e'en cowards' hearts, that swift deploy
Ending the rescue march and setting might
Where hope was swept away. There, as the surf
That laps along a strand, the waves swing forth
In battle-line, until o'er hill and dale
It reaches past the sight; then sinks to earth
To wait the call of trumpets to its deed.
The rescue march is ended, and what comes
Needs but a brave awaiting.
                                        Up lifts the sun
That shone to hills and hearts the yester morn
And bade these brave men stand where brothers stood
Who lie upon this earth: brave, patient sun,
With welcome for all deeds and light for feet
Unquestioning where they tread, unto its noon
And on unto its eve!
                                  See those near lines,
One that sleeps for near waking, one that sleeps
In the forever, waiting for the trump
That shall awake them past the realm of days.
How very like those brothers as they lie
Hap-hazard where they fall, some eyes to heaven
As if they saw their peace in its still depths;
Some with their hidden faces turned to earth
As babes that hug them to the mother's breast,
Shielded by loving arms; all in that trust
Of the enfolding deeps that comes to all
When lids of eyes go down. Yea, they are one,

Those silent brothers, in the sleep they share,
Though they of further line wait tap of drum,
And nimble bugle's cry to wake for war;
And they the nearer for the angel's call
In the far morrow, summoning to peace.
So lie those twins together on the field —
Death and his brother Sleep.
It is so still
In air and in all hearts that birds dare sing
Their welcome to the day. Yea, 't is a dream
That ever else than sleep with its wild dreams
Stirred this abiding peace. No war fronts here;
Even the guns are drowsing as their tasks
Were all forgot, — idle as cannon old
That are the children's playthings in a park;
Fearful but for their villain crash of yore —
Now well past all ill deeds. The horses lie
Beside their weary riders. All 's so still
The mother partridge pipes her tiny chicks
Unfearing 'mid the sleepers, and the blooms
Trod down by hurrying feet lift up once more
Their chalices to sky. So for an hour;
Then on the fringes of yon sunlit wood,
Where stand our outposts half a mile away,
We see the skirmishers' swift ordered line
Sweep to the front, and hear the pattering shots
That tell the storm-front near. Now on it comes,
Surging from out the forest like a wave
Shattered by surge through tangles, but swift shaped

Into a mighty breaker that rolls on
Unto the waiting shore. Swift on they come
To grasp the victory they won at eve
But night kept from their hands. They see it near,
For on that field there stands no longer wall
To 'fend their onset. One swift rush will win
Their way unto the wreckage by the shore.
Theirs is the mighty hunger of a host
To grasp the fruit of hard-won victory:
It spans a wondrous reach of emptiness,
From patriot's longing for his country's weal
To that of hungry bellies. On it roars
Lust-swept unto its goal, a mighty tide
Of all incarnate greeds. Ah, but now lifts
A wonder to their eyes. To bugle's shout
And whir of drums, from out the earth there spring
The lines that went to earth as night came down,
Of dead made live again in brothers true
Who heard far cry and hastened. They stand firm
As men with planted feet to save their dead,
Their dear lives profit in the wrestle hard
Made with rude death for fate: yea, as a rock
To meet that valiant surge and hurl it back,
An adamantine shore 'gainst roaring sea,
Making its raging impotent and vain,
Commanding it be stilled.
'T was long ago.
That battle's smoke hath gone into the void,
Its thunder to the deeps where all is hushed.

The blossoms spring the fairer on that field,
As is their wont to where the faithful lie,
That earth may give to beauty chance to lift
Back to nobility the noble dust
Of long-forgotten days.

UNDER THE BANNER

Come with upbearing wings, for we are forth
To scan a realm trod down by warring hosts.
From the great river eastward to the sea,
'Mid Allegheny's peaks, and by the shore
Where laps on coral strands the wondrous stream
Of tropic ocean, troop the hosts of war.
There bugles ring and tireless cannon throb
With pulses that their echo finds in hearts
'Neath roof-trees shadowed by enduring fear.
Come with God's staying hope, to see this earth
Shaped for His glory in the joy of sun
Turned to the Devil's altar, where men haste
As moths into its flame. Come with the eyes
That look past Satan to the eternal fields,
Sown with the seed of valour, whence shall spring
The goodly corn that giveth to the store
Unstained by reaper's blood. Yea, let us send
War's horrors to the deep, and keep in heart
The noble it unmasks; o'erlook its shames,
So we may catch in light of brothers' eyes
What lay in brothers' hearts they could not tell,
Till true faith broke the seal and bade us read
As the dear light went out.
'Mid all that rage,
Wide as the sea, behold this lesser field, —

Still to a Cæsar's grasp of earth a realm, —
Where, from the Mississippi to the hills
That look as sentinels toward the sea,
As they would watch the coming of their foe
In marshalled surges, for a hundred leagues
Stretches our war-line, that hath wrestled on,
Still sweeping forward as a mighty wave
That fronts the hurricane; now beaten back
In wreck from steadfast rock, to lift again
'Fore the vast rage that sways it. Here it roots
In the rude surge that brings it nigh the shore
And sunders Rebeldom, so cleaving straight
The way unto war's end.
There in a morn
Of promise-bringing days the banners flit
Beneath the shadowy arches of the pines,
And trumpets wake the silence as they sing
With hope that hails the shore and hard task done
By willing hearts and hands. Life hath its morn,
And needs no lark to carol in its day
When past the night it sees to victory:
So singing, they troop on.
The master stays
Amid his aides upon a hill that looks
Far to the north, wherein the rear-guard holds
The lengthened chain of posts that stays this realm,
Hard won, hard held against the desperate foe,
That sure would smite to win again his own
So soon his hands were free. It was the plan

In our vast weaving of the net of war
That east and west our hosts should press and hold
All set against them, so no force could 'scape
The clutch to range afar. We little knew
How from that valour-breeding earth would spring
Youth from the cradle, age from by the grave,
Shaped to war's sternest use. Ay, we were fools
After the ancient way, in reckoning
Brothers who stood against us less than men
Of our own hearts and thews. But he who looked
There to the north saw far, — saw well the chance,
How to a leader's call from earth would leap
A might to break that line and leave his host
A drifting wreck lost in a 'wildering sea:
So, with a heart that echoed to his drums
Roaring on to the south, with soldier's eye
He scans that northern way. There all is still.
The fields are tenantless; the chimneys send
No wreath to sky; for all there knows the peace
Of war-trod land where earth 's a widened grave.
But see in that vast stillness, there afar
Upon the edge of sky, the vultures swing
Out of their ordered circling, as they knew
Life breaks upon their realm. Now where the way
Mounts o'er yon sunlit hill a dot moves on,
A trail of dust behind, and now it shapes
To horse and man: that olden messenger
Who down the ages hath the dust of earth
Spurned on his eager errand, bearing on

Command of fate to spur the hearts of men.
Now he is here, and halts his weary steed
Before the silent master. Swift he tells
That from the east a hundred thousand men,
Out nether earth, or sky, have broken through
Our slender line; swept o'er the men who stood
To die where they might stand; and hurled straight on
Unto the north, with naught to bar the way
But weary remnants of the wrecked commands
Who set their wounds against the victor's host;
Yea, and a throng of laggards, who now heard
Their brothers' cry and knew at last the throb
Of hearts awakened, springing forth to deeds
With nothing of the soldier save their souls,
A mighty tumult purposeless and vain
Against that veteran might that would march on,
If valour captained it, to Erie's shore
And rend the land in twain.
Ye who have seen
Great captains face hard peril know the look
That tells the might of man — that still, far gaze,
Summing a realm of deeds and reckoning well
What duty bids be done; how steadfastly
They face the vast on-coming of the fates
Sweeping upon them with the might to 'whelm
Lean souls of common men. And then how swift
They spring upon that peril with the stroke
That smites it down. Yea, 'tis a little thing
Whereon the Lord hath writ the soul of man,

No bigger than this page, and yet it holds
The master and the servant graven there;
Of all the ages long the history,
Since in the brutes He willed that man should be
His temple in this wilderness of days.
So for a while our leader looks away
Over the spaces: then to his waiting aides
Gives orders brief that send them swift afar
Southward to stay the march and turn our host
Back on their hard-won way; and east and west
Unto his generals, to gather all
Straight to his banner for the work to do
Of winning back the realm so bravely won.
Yea, it is hard to feel an empire slip
Out of his willing hands into the deep,
Yet 'tis the soldier's part to face the storm
As he would happy faring.
Swift they come
From south and east and west in ordered streams,
As rills that know their way unto the sea.
A hundred miles of march, and all are there
Beneath one flag in eager backward march,
Rebargaining for fields that brothers bought
And paid with faithful lives — no beaten host,
But stout of heart, as when their bugles sang
Of victories to sky. For well they know
That 'fore them is the foe, and their stout hearts
Leave else unto their leader.
On they go,

From dawn to dark, in those long summer days,
Scant-fed, sore-footed, gaunt, weak save in heart,
But there well-tempered steel. The pole-star lifts
As march on march they win their certain way,
Trailing the longed-for foe.
                                        A wondrous thing
Is a vast army in the primal realm
Of ancient changeless woods and ravaged fields
Wrecked by the tread of war, swift surging on
As some great planet parted from its realm
Through spaces seeking for its destiny
Hurled by the will of God — and yet it goes
A well-shaped commonwealth, where each man sets
His feet to win and ward. There is the van —
The keen-eyed thousand horse — that scans the paths
For what may lurk of danger, sweeping off
The nimble foes that seek to block its way.
Afar to right and left the flankers swing,
Searching each vale and wood with ready stroke
For what may menace. Swift stroke, then straight on —
And after all, the rear-guard's wrapping lines,
Warding the myriad wagons, droves of beeves,
The throng of helpless gathered to that hold,
As in old wars to castles. With them go
The ambulances for the broken men
Who 've fallen on the way and are not healed,
By prick of bayonet or slap of blade —
A shapeless huddle till the foemen try
Assault upon it, then swift-ordered host

That stands a fortress 'gainst his stout assail.
Within that moving wall of steel and fire
Marches a commonwealth of kindred souls.
Look well upon them, see what dwelleth there
Writ clear on every face: the ancient tale
Of poet's fancy, valour flaunting out
Its vaunting banners? Nay, a sorry throng,
After the manner of earth's plain, strong men
Set in the common deeds of common days.
A marching folk, such as trooped on of old
Through Europe's trackless wilds to bear down Rome.
A host with peace in heart, but war in hand
For whoso bars its way. An idle rout
Until the bugles sing, and then stern lines
That sweep as mastering surges straightway on
Whereto the great sea wills. Those who know war
In kingly pomp of hosts shaped by the art
Of Old World masters see but rabble here —
Soldiers to be or soldiers that have been
Until they knew defeat.
But see them near,
Ye critics of war's work, see now this mob
Of farmers, shopmen, smiths, a folk in arms,
A dirty clutter of on-straggling men
Chaffing their leaders, girding all that lies
'Twixt Heaven and Hell. For now comes the test
That tells a soldier dwells within their hides:
Before them lies a river wide and deep,
Swift flowing, fit to try the skill

Of very Cæsar, trained in war's keen art,
And on the further shore the crested line
Of ramparts crowned with foemen. 'T is a check
To mate the deftest player till hard siege
Batters those walls to dust — save for the might
Inborn of men who know this earth their Lord's
And they its freemen: wonted to the ways
Of keen, hard smiting at the front of ills
With linkèd hearts and hands.
Swiftly the scouts
Pierce through that menace, picture it for deeds
To silent leader of the waiting host
Changed now from rabble to firm-ordered men.
Then bugles ring, and forth the batteries
Whirl to the hill-tops, while the columns break
To battle order, steadfast creeping on
To win the hither shore; while from the train
Hurry the pontoniers with ready gear
To bridge the stream: scores of good boats on wheels,
Cables and anchors, timbers for the way
To bear the rushing legions. In an hour
The action waits the word; a cannon shouts,
And ere its shot is forth its thunder cloud,
The valley is a roar. From every point
That offers vantage leap the screaming shells,
While from the woods and fields the musketry
Rings till it drowns the bugles. Swiftly rolls
The cloud of battle o'er the trembling stream,
Mantling its valley, shutting out the sun.

Now 'neath that pall sweep on the pontoniers
Down to the riverside and toss their boats
As they were cockle-shells into the wave;
A moment and they 're ranged. It nothing halts
That from the further shore death cometh swift
From hidden marksmen. As each toiler sinks
Beneath the reddened stream, a brother 's there
With hands to clutch the task, by him another,
Patient and still, to stand where he hath stood
So soon as he doth fall.
Now it is built,
And o'er the firm-set way the skirmishers
Leap forth as unleashed hounds unto their work,
Whirling the scattered marksmen of the foe
As smoke before the wind. Then sudden pour
The eager columns, infantry and horse,
Cannon that waited for this final stroke,
In tide that shapes it swift to ordered lines
That circle round that hold, and smother out
What flickers there of fire. The task 's half done,
The foe well scotched, so on in surety
Streams the brave river o'er the other stream,
Each seeking for its sea.
Ye who know war
But in fair pictured fancies — headlong charge,
Or wall-like lines whereon its surges break —
Know not its mightiest part in deeds like this,
Where stout men hurl them 'gainst the rugged world,
Rend through its mountains, bridge its mighty deeps,

And count their foemen least of all the balks
That hard fate sets athwart their eager souls.
Now as the rear-guard passes, swift the bridge
Slips from its moorings ; once again its gear
Of boats and tackle mounts upon the wheels
And swings on to the north. The battle-lines
Fall from that hold away, our dead are graved,
The volleys ring, and then the quickstep tells
The part of comrades done. Straight on, straight on,
With no care of the foes they leave behind —
The wreckèd host within that ruined hold.
An hour's delay in summons or assault
Were one league less of safety in the quest
To save their commonwealth. True soldiers count
Their foemen as no more than pieces set
On the great chessboard for the game of war —
They lift or leave them as it fits their play :
So those hard-battered foes are left to creep
Where they may will away — to earth their dead,
To salve their wounded, and then hunger on
Through the lean desert of this ruined land,
Seeking their far-off comrades.
Straight on, straight on
Our mighty rabble streams, while day by day
The store of victual shrinks. The herds of beeves,
That in the outset seemed to cumber earth,
And taxed the rear-guards' nimble care to keep
From the swift raiders, shrink to sorry score,
Lean as their herders, so that when they fall

The buzzards scorn to pluck them. 'T is no more
The semblance of a march: the men break ranks
And drift across the fields for chance to fill
Their empty bellies with what they may glean
Where hosts have starved before. The parchèd earth
Hungers as they, but giveth all it hath —
Now here an ancient nut, and there a nest
Of lonely bird that with strong wings hath won
Nurture from far to stay its starveling brood,
Where once was fecund plenty. 'Hap they find
'Sconced in some sheltering crevice of the hills
A cot, whereto has crept a helpless throng,
Widows and orphans, with a scanty store, —
The sweepings of their larders and their bins, —
To eke out famished days; the while they hope
Slow down unto despair beneath God's sky
And 'mid His generous fields. The path is hid
By woven brambles, long untrod, so blind
A hound would fail the way. But as they go
On their swift hungering search, they hear afar
In the still air of eve a mother's song
Lulling her babe to sleep — the olden song
That builds a stair from sorest earth to heaven;
But they are of deep Hell, and naught they hear
But the hard cry of hunger. Straight they go,
As famished wolves that break through tangled wood,
Straightway to plunder they have scented far.
'T is quickly done as fits the Devil's work,
And he has one more harvest from this earth

Whereto the Lord sent man. The night shuts down
As black as night should be in path of war
To hide it from the sky, and through it creep
The skulking hounds back to their sheltering flags
To sleep in safety there by faithful hearts —
Good ward 'gainst Satan.
                                        Yea, and ye who hear
Would hide ye in that darkness, waiting day
To light again your flags and heal your eyes
With all the glory of brave hearts that march
To save your commonwealth. So have your sires
The weary ages on made of the dark
A shield to hide them from the shame of war,
And all your singers help to blink the truth
That war is Hell, loosed from the nether deeps
Where ye help Satan slip the bolts that hold
His cagèd hosts from man.
                                        The morning herds
The stars back to their fold, and vagrant day,
That once sowed plenty in these waiting fields,
Glowers upon their ruin. Forth there sings
The cry of bugle — senseless shout of brass
That roars so long as there is left of breath
To stir the heart of man.
                                        So day by day
And night by night they tread those vistas down
That open endlessly.
                                   Where is the foe
That marched unto the north? No answer comes

From scouts who vanished swift into the dark
That warps this lifeless earth. The soldier knows
His task in battle's clutch, in patient siege,
When stroke on stroke slow wins him to the end
Over his comrades' graves: but thus to grope
In the vast silence of forgotten lands,
Seeking the spectre of an unknown host,
Brings need of men who look afar and high
And not to common flags.
There comes a morn
When with the lift of veil the fore-guard halts,
Looks forth, and listens to a pulse that beats
Far in the night mists: scarce it is a sound,
Rather the throbbing of a far-off sea
To wake the heart that is to it attuned.
The soldier knows it is the bay of guns,
Crying their welcome unto foe and friend.
Swift with their swaying flags the signal men
Send wide their message to the hosts that shout
The weary shipwrecked's welcome. Never men
Spent by far swimming gladlier hailed the shore
Of the entombing sea: no longer lost
In numb immensity, but foot on earth
Where heart and hand may smite a man's way on
To day or dark, they lift their weary packs,
And lines that crept as wounded serpents swing
On with the might that sees to victory.
'T was forty miles away where leaped those guns,

But ere the sunset they have trod them down
And won touch with their homes.
                                        All night it flows,
That wondrous torrent through the gateway set
In the stout warding lines. First enters in
The train that bears the wounded and the worn —
The wreckage of hard deeds, who lift their heads
To look upon their peace, and know 'tis done,
That endless racking over stony ways;
And then the thousand wagons, freighted once
With plenteous rations, rattling now as drums,
But all too heavy for the famished mules
That stumbling sway them on; and then the guns,
Dusty and grim, but still fate's tireless hounds
To bay the coming hunt; after, the swarms
Of troopers marching by their worn-out steeds,
That scarce can pack their saddles and their bones —
A starvèd host, yet man and beast alike
With hearts and thews of steel that need but rest.
A fill of sleep and victual, and those frames
Will hurricane the earth, while now they grope
Like spectres to their graves, and lay them down
As they would bide forever, — each a space
Of silent hunger waiting to be filled
Of all the Lord can send of comrades' help.
And first for that good filling comes the throng
Of lusty youth and manhood waiting there,
Ten thousand hulking fellows full of sap,
To swell the sunken ranks — raw men, but true.

They try "Hurrah" — it dies within their throats
At sight of that grim silence. Could ye cheer
The ghosts of Cæsar's legions flitting in
Through port ye 've opened wide? With willing hands
And nimble wits they help them to their rest,
Loose gear and lay the weariness to earth;
Swift from the camp-fires bring them food and drink,
Lend, best of all, the touch of loving hands
That stays the flagging soul.
Oh, it is good
To find the port when we have fought the sea
Until the life is out. Yea, all this realm
Is shaped of deeps and havens — deeps where souls
Shall fight on unto death, and past the gate
Know touch of comrade's hand.
So with the men:
They drink in life until their shapes are full,
Feed on from dawn to dark, sleep fast till day,
And then *da capo* till they wake to sing.
But they, the captains, have a fight to wage
'Gainst that hard foeman Time. All is set clear
Of battles, march, and siege, yet those who read
Know nothing of war's toil: to fit the trains;
Shoe horse and man; mend all the precious gear
Of that vast engine so that it may fare,
Once more stout ship, forth to the 'wildering sea
Ready for battle's shout; while those who care
For food of beast and man heap up the store
In endless wagons ranked along the streets.

The ordnance men try every arm to find
If it be true for duty — fill the stores
Of cartridge, shot, and shell. It is a deed
To set a hundred thousand men for proof
In war's hard tasking; else is for the Lord,
Who loves the ready host. Yea, it is brave
To see a mighty ship cleave on through deeps,
Or see a host swing to the marshal's wand;
But ye know there the moment's deed that shines
Because an unseen host has faithfully
Delved for that doing till the task was done,
All save the momentary.
'T is ready now:
On the third day, the thing that entered in
Like phantom ship to haven breasts the sea
As Nelson's ships that sought their Trafalgar,
And counted naught but reaches of the deep
'Twixt them and victory — brave for that dark
Wherein their fate is hid.
Behold the field:
It lacks all fields can give save place to lie
Where waiting vultures set them to their task.
Yet forth they stride as men upon their quest,
Naught seeing save its end. For now the scouts,
Swift riding through the dark, have searched the foe,
Found that his march was halted on the brink
Of the Ohio, shrunken to a span
But fronted by a host swift gathered there —
Greybeards and lads and women clad as men;

A throng that martinets look on as leaves
A whiff of powder scatters, yet a host
That those who know their folk know well will stay
Where they have mind to die, yea, stupidly,
Because they see but 'fore them, while hard men
Who know war's game see well to what 's behind
Of goodly space for scamper till they clutch
A better place to stand, though it be far
From where their captains wait them.
Let us look
The nearer at that muster of our folk,
The vastest it has sent adown our ways
Since England sprang to stay that mighty king
Who masked in petticoats, upon that day
When the Armada swept unto her shores,
And gave the world fair token of what waits
'Fore the invaders' feet. Ye who have seen
This tedious creature, man, go sleepily
In his dull round of duty, with no blink
On sky or deeper earth, know not the man
The Lord hath hid within that idle heap
To wait His purposes. This plain, dull man
Comes from the dust, and unto dust goes back
The generations on, until some morn
Flames on the sky the call unto his heart;
And then his head lifts up, for to his soul
Enters the waiting might of men who bore
Himself in valiant days: the men who stood
Firm planted on the hills by Alfred's side;

Trooped forth o'er Tilbury field, or built the wall
Of Naseby where the surge of Rupert's charge
Broke into wrack and left our England's might
Unshaken for all time. So troop they on,
Those silent majesties of vanished days,
To old familiar places on the wall
Of that enduring fortress — heart of man —
They 've built the ages on. A motley throng —
Old Britons in their breech-clouts, Saxon thanes,
Men who stayed Cœur de Lion, men who drew
Stout bows at Agincourt, or drove the pikes
Straight over Cressy's ground, Old Ironsides,
Who as the Devil battled for the Lord
When came His crowning mercy at Dunbar,
And nearer yet the men who laid them down
In stout King's mountain fight, or found the gate
To the eternal on unnamèd fields
That gave them all they asked of earth and sky,
Man's true way out of life. Yea, they are still;
Slip so as shadows to the place that he,
The keeper of the hold, knows not they come
To stay beside him, and if needs be die
Once more faith's noble death.
                                                  Here is a flock
Of fledglings from far nests, mere piping lads,
Who 've 'scaped their mothers and are forth to heed
The old cry in their hearts that made them men
With one brave shout. Nay, nay, they will not turn,
For that high note doth echo on and on

In their awakened souls, as yet unfilled
With coward greeds and lusts. Ye may tread down
Such callow youth 'neath hardened legions' feet;
Ye will not find them in the scuttling rout,
But with their faces turned unto the sky,
Where their wide eyes have seen the messenger
Cleaving the spaces.
Behold another throng
From the far end of life, old, grizzled men,
Who 've won them to the verge of threescore ten,
When Psalmist reckons life as weariness,
Its fires out, and naught but ashes where
The once bright altar flamed — the cannoneers
Who rammed the heated guns in Perry's fight,
Or when brave Pakenham's host at New Orleans
Swept chaff-like 'fore their blast. They long have dwelt
Beside their chimneys, dreaming out their days
With tales of ancient war; dear, half-forgot,
Mere treasured memories, that share no more
In profitable deeds. The yesterday
They heard the cry that quicks the hearts of men:
Up went their white heads, straightened out their backs,
And in their veins came tide of youth again.
Swift was their muster by an iron gun,
That for an age hath slept on village green:
An ancient war dog that shared memories
With them of olden deeds. 'T was rusted deep,
Until its throat was like a honeycomb,
Its trail and wheels worm-eaten — still the gun

Round which their youth had danced in many a fight.
The village smith had patched it here and there,
The grandames shaped their petticoats for bags
To hold the powder, and the pyramid
Of painted shot half sunken in the earth
Gave rest of ammunition. There they are,
The mightiest score that ever trod a field,
For in their helpless valour is the sign
Of what lives on within the hearts of men
Even when life is out. "A chance to die
Where men would die to keep their land from shame:
We ask but that, good captain," was their prayer,
Straight from their soldier hearts.
Of such the host
That halted Bragg upon the Ohio's verge,
Made that stern soldier see that 'fore him lay
A wilderness of war, where stout men fall
Before the might of shapeless throngs who count
But on the stroke they send, and take their death
With never look behind. So he lay there,
To speculate with fate, perchance to win
Now here and there a pawn; to force the holds,
Enwrappèd by his hosts as isles in sea,
To render to his arms; nursing his strength
On the rich gleanings of the ravaged farms:
So played the Fabian game until fair time
Gave chance for deeds. 'T is a good game
When ye have Rome for castle, with Rome's hearts
Ranked close upon its walls. Ay, but that name

Of Fabius spells ruin when you wait
In open fields a veteran foe that swings
As eagle for the pounce.
So forth it goes,
That agèd host, upon its fatal way
Over an earth that waited in stark drought
For slacking of its thirst from hearts of men.
This epic of the march may not be told
In straightway fashion of the mountebank,
When with his puppets he bedecks his boards,
Each matching trick to other; so the play
To squeak of pipe and whack of drum goes on
Until, his pennies gathered, comes the end.
We now behold the sea, whose cadences
Top here and there the roar and then fall back
Into the 'whelming shout of all its hosts,
A symphony that wakes a seraph's ear,
But dulleth that of man. So we may catch
Above the diapason cry on cry,
Of those who sink and those who touch the shore:
With that in heart, we guess the else of man
That goes into the deep.
The march flows on,
A mighty river sheaf of myriad springs
Swayed by the Lord unto His waiting sea,
Wherein each life is but a drop of dew —
So says the master of the Orient faith.
Nay, sage, it is not thus with men; they stay,
Living or dead, as jewels in the stream,

Or in the outer deep whereto it flows;
Such end in all-confounding fits the realm
Of primal things that never lifted up
Glad eyes and knew their Lord. But those that see
Unto His throne live on, for they have looked
Unto His splendour. Let us jewels grasp,
Now here, now there, from out the hiding sea;
Set them to gleam awhile within our hearts,
So we may light us on our upward way,
Knowing it leads to God.
First of these gems
See a fair youth, who looked but yesterday
Into the dark and knew the Lord was there
Commanding him to deeds; woke as a man
From childhood's dreams upon the mother's knee
To face men's grimmest work. Hail, Edward Wolff!
Near half a hundred years have sent their blooms
To deck thy grave, and all of thee is dust
That earth may claim its own; and yet thou stay'st
With those who die that men may ever live
In the Lord's light, well knowing that black days
Of starkest winter wait dear life to spring
Up from the earth to heaven. Still I see there
By Cynthiana's ford the leaping guns
Baying glad welcome to the host that comes
Straight on o'er heapèd dead. Sure is the toll
They pay for that hard passing of the flood;
Swift is the dance of nimble cannoneers
To the quick music of those ministers

That serve the rage of men. There, 'mid the flame
And whirl of smoke, I see thy fair young face
Lit by that hell-fire — girl's face, with a crown
Of golden ringlets fit to grace a song.
Right o'er their dead sweep Morgan's veterans
Up to the guns. With one far look away,
Down slip'st thou by thy comrades. So 't is gone,
Thy life made for God's day; and all is still,
Save for the victor's shout and mother's cry
To deep that answers not.
Roar on, ye drums;
Clamour, ye trumpets, to the eternal vault;
Tramp on, ye legions, tread into the earth
All of its blossoms, stain its noblest springs
With the heart-blood of man! Harvest earth's woe
To the eternal garner! Still we will glean
Out of your ravage the glory of days.
Hail, Jackson! in thy shape there fares a man
Who should have marched by Cæsar o'er the world
With idle might that treadeth straightway on;
For in thy eyes I see his mastering soul
Look o'er his legions to the bounds of earth.
I well remember how thou pacedst the cage
Where thou wast prisoned by our 'customed life —
A courteous, placid lion, trained to bear
The gilded chains as if it loved their frets:
With lifted head and eyes that gazed afar
And look that compassed wilds. Yea, well I knew,
When as a lad I faced thee, how there dwelt

That primal monarch 'neath the gentleman,
Ready to spring into its native realm
When time came for the leap. Now thou art free
To rage on to the end — the lion's end
That comes the morrow, when on yonder field
Thou 'lt charge with Cæsar in thy legions' front
'Gainst legions stout as e'er that master set.
I see thy valour lift the front of war
As toppling surge and send it roaring on.
I see thee ride its crest, and hear thy shout
When it breaks on that shore, breaks and rolls back
From the unshakable. Then in that wreck,
Swift shaping as the sea for new assault,
Rages my lion with the might to sway
The host of demons in the heart of man
To deeds of God or Satan. Forth it sweeps
Once more to smite, once more to know the rock
Of firm-knit brothers' hearts. So on and on
Beat those vast pulses of the warring deep
Until the battle ends, and they who seek —
Those sometime foes — together for their dead,
They turn thy face to sky to see the light
That lit thee forth still in its silence glow,
As with God's welcome to brave deeds afar.

Roar out, ye bugles, clamour forth ye drums,
Trample, ye hosts, until the earth is sere
As the black streets of Hell. Yet well we glean
For the garners of love seed that shall spring
To beauty forever.

So as our host sweeps on look forth the eyes,
The stars from out man's deep, dear eyes that see
O'er battle's clamour to their waited place
In the eternal peace. Why should we name
Now here, now there, a man, when all who go
On in that vast procession march with all,
And have for due more than all song can lend
To sing them on their way? Yea, we will leave
Those unsung men unto their loneliness
That foldeth in the heart that seeks the grave
With Him for guide. We 'll turn as for a look
Upon those edifices that are shaped
When brother 's linked to brother for far tasks,
Where man's life is but drop in sea of deeds.

Behold those banners that flit down the way,
Those ragged bits of flame that top the staves
Borne by those trusted, who know well the trust
Is warrant of swift death. Each lights a throng
Of close-knit men, who know the might that comes
From soul of brother who stays by his side,
Firm there for all that fate may ever send:
Those ancient legions dubbed with modern names,
The regiments and squadrons of our time,
Still the old legions that hath valour borne
Since man learned might of man, that have marched on
With Alexanders long forgot and Hannibals
That lacked their Livy's page. Here is a host
Fair sample of their shape — a hundred men

That ride beside their guns, those brazen-mouthed,
Who have bade welcome over many a field
To many a roaring charge — swept it away
As hurricane sweeps corn, to sullen wait
For next that cometh on. A scurvy crew
Of unkempt chaps: some in their saddles loll
Like idle louts, catching at winks of sleep
And dreams of far-off homes; some o'er the guns,
For better chance upon those lurching beds
Than saddle gives unto their tired hulks.
Their horses wander widely as they will,
Gaunt frames that once were steeds, now skins and bones,
Seeking like starvèd hounds the chance to stay
The desert hunger in that desert earth.
Those caravans that troop o'er western plains,
Mere odds and ends of folk, seem as war-proof
As this dejected medley. — Then the cry
Of bugles from the van, and random shots
That ring from yonder wood, send spurring aides
Bearing swift orders down the surging line.
With the first note, as at the lanyard's pull
That bids the shot away, those hulks leap up
Into their war shape. Echo sends the call
Back from the hills. Five score of veterans,
Stern-visaged, nimble, gather round the guns,
Each to appointed place. The horses swing
Unto their stations eager as the men,
Heads up, ears pricked, and nostrils flaring wide
To catch the trumpet's note that sends it forth,

A firm-knit might of linkèd beasts and men.
This fearful thing 's a legion, where the dead
Fight on with those who die; where comers new
Slip into shades of those who fare swift on
Into the shadow-land. Now flareth out
The call from its own trumpet. See it whirl
By the right flank away, crushing right on
With roar that shakes the earth and stirs the sky
In storm-cloud beaten from the parchèd earth,
O'er fences, stones, and gullies, till the note
Of trumpet swings it to o'ertopping hill,
Into its ragged order; moment's whirl
Of guns and men and steeds ere it is shaped
Into the waiting silence 'fore the rage
Of storm comes on. The daunted foe draws back
At stroke of fore-guard; back the bugles send
The legions to the march. Once more those men
Seem lazy brutes — no more.
The sun is down,
And all our host spreads out as in the sky
The marching thunder-clouds in mists diffuse
When the hot day is o'er. Now from the vales
And the far hill-tops twinkle the camp-fires
Where lie those legions, ordered so they 'll stand
At call in battle-lines. On every way
And 'cross the fields the pickets watch the dark,
And far through wood and valley sweep the scouts,
To smite and hold the foe and send swift word
That sets the lines for battle. All 's as safe

As brothers' faith can shape it. 'T is the time
When men put off their arms, and once again
Are lads upon a playground, or afar
In homes where dwell their sweethearts or their sires,
Or 'hap to those still places where their dead
Sleep at the end of all their lifetime war;
When he who goes observant through the throng,
Seeking to read what 's writ upon the page, —
That which escapes our volumed histories, —
May see the look on face that tells the man
What woman makes and keeps to serve the Lord,
Or 'hap old Satan — look of yearning heart
For mother, sister, maid, that dims hard eyes
And softeneth those lineaments of brass
War sets where was the man. Yea, like to death
New come with peace, transfiguring the shape,
Is the soul's stillness in those memories
So calm, so far away, so in the deep
Of the great primal, love. 'T is but a glint
Of all that host of shinings that are seen
By eyes that see in eyes what makes them stars
Gleaming in heaven's vault.
Now for the sheen
From off another facet of man's soul.
Here in an empty sheepfold 'mid the weeds
Once green and lusty, now like crackling straw
That crumples 'neath th' intruder's feet and makes
A sorry bed for those poor wretched shapes,
The bearers lift the stricken, lay them down

In the good churchyard order, two and two,
With space between them where the surgeons kneel
To do their part. Swiftly the space is filled,
And swift those men of mercy do their tasks,
With the still look of those who seek to heal
Or help the passer. Some are from the front,
Struck down in little fights, borne in for miles
By weary brothers on rude litters shaped
With muskets and with blankets, others packed
As sacks on saddle-bow to 'scape the chase
Of the on-coming foe, with brother's arms
To hold them safe if 'hap life in them stayed.
And with these, smitten in the shock of arms,
A white-faced throng of those who in the march
Have battled on against the fever's might,
Fought its grim spectre, praying for the strength
To wear once more the weary march away
In hope of bettered morn, at last to fall
Worn to mere shred of man. The lantern sends
A moment's light upon each agony
As the deft surgeon careth for the woe
With whate'er may assuage, be it but sleep,
The blessed sleep that wakes so peacefully
In God's own morning. Now the light moves on,
The stars look down into those weary eyes.
So last good-night is said. Oh, ye who dwell
Where youth and manhood, stayers of dear homes,
Who bear the lightsome burthen of long years
To set the world with blossoms and with fruit

In love and heritage of love, see them laid
By their untimely graves, lone and afar
From all that helps the passing — look ye here
On God's undying shame.
Turn ye again
The wondrous jewel of this life and see
Another facet that sends forth its ray
To glimmer merrily, an ancient sheen
That 's lit the night for legions since they 've tramped
This old orb up and down. Here are the men
We saw about the guns, who presto changed
From louts to veterans and back to louts,
To tune of piping brass. Presto once again,
They change to players. In that brotherhood
Of jumbled men shaped by the legion's soul
There 's wreckage of two troupes, whose trade went out
When war set its grim comedy afield
To hold the eyes of men. There, 'twixt two guns
Set on the spokes and axles, they 've a stage
Made of the wagon boards, contrived to fit
Their frolic humour well, as like of old
In barns and courtyards where the masters bade
Their eager audience to see far Rome,
Or to the elfin realms of fairy-land,
Over the dirty setting of the play. Yea, this suits well
To time and place. On either side the guns,
The brass new polished, yet with their black maws
Where harbours death, stand warders of the stage,
Lit by the battle lanterns, Argus-eyed,

That serve the gunners when in dark they dance
Their morris round them, or that light the shell
When, held 'twixt knees, the steady hand cuts fuse
So shot may find the foe; or show who 's down
And who swift takes his place. There 's music, too,
For with the host go fiddlers, flutes, and else
To shape an orchestra. For audience,
A shouting multitude that chorus sends
To every well-known song; applauds the part
Of every player who acts to its mind,
Else hurls him off the boards. Ye who have seen
Smug congregations gathered for a play
As yesterday for preaching, know not how
The mimic life can stir the hearts of men
Who roar on with it; find in it the torch
To light them on hard ways.
They 're nimble chaps,
And set all in a trice so 't is prepared
As swift as for a fight. The scene awaits
The entry of the actors from the dark
That serves as green room; now the first leaps in
To roar the prelude — burnt cork and ivory
That make the nigger; yea, they judge right well
What fits the time and place, for place and time
Are servants of that blackness fate hath sent
To rob them of their day: and it is well
They take it merrily — and like the shape
That brought us Afric night, gives what it hath
Of fun and frolic as it dances on
Into the night it made.

Welcome, Jim Crow!
For all thou art a raven, thou canst sing
As mockingbird 'neath moon; thou art no lark
To carol up the sun; yea, all thou hast
Of chortle in thy pipe is echo sent
From ancient droning 'neath the lazy palms,
Or mimic of thy masters. Yet thy soul
Hath in it that dear note of primal days
When first the brute looked forth and knew him man,
With goodly earth about and light above,
Dim and afar, and yet that light of heaven
The realm first knew in thee. Howl out thy song
And thrum thy banjo. When this age is writ
And all its wonders counted, thou wilt stay
The strangest of its shapes — telling what waits
Of fate within those stubborn wrecks of time
Which lie the world about, to block the path
Of prosperous ventures. Our sins set thee here
To do the tasks of beasts, and now we go
To reckon our account and take fit doom
Where shame pays its hard forfeits. Prance away
Upon our stage; it is all well with thee,
Thy merry heart will bear thee ages on
Amid the ruin that thy presence breeds
In this fair commonwealth; and if it falls
There in the wreckage, thou wilt prance right on
In the old Afric way, and never know
What went into the deep. 'Hap 't is thy part,
Thine and thy like of changeless primitive,

To keep the ancient substance of our kind,
The flesh and bones of body and of soul,
Safe in the garner of the baser life,
So that those vagrants we name civilized,
Those prodigals who waste their heritage
In far and daring ventures towards the sky,
May find a pauper's refuge in the hut
These humbler keep for them. — He needs be grim
Who looks on Jim Crow's face and turns away
From its contagious grin, for there 's the fun,
The immortal fun, that fences souls from deeps,
Shuts out the infinite, makes actors all
In the dear comedy. Jackdaws are grave
And monkeys bewigged judges to Jim Crow,
Who sends straight to our eyes the antic shape
Of all men's doings.

The prelude shapes the play; there 's nothing here
But gibes and quirks and merry happenings
In cracks and whacks, with now and then a song
That arches spaces with the one word, "home,"
To still the boisterous throng. 'T is but a glint,
Quick turned away, for those rude actors knew
Their part right well: so once again the jeers
At all that 's set above them, from the Lord
To last whose won his straps. To hear the gibes
And roaring echo from the listeners,
You 'd think our host on verge of mutiny.
It is the ancient way of all their folk,

To find their fellowship with gods and men
In howled contention 'gainst all things that are ;
Profaning all their altars in their words,
To die beside them faithful in their deeds.
The morrow they will tread with willing feet
Straight to their graves at bidding of the least
Of those they scoff this eve — with never halt
Upon the Master's way.
Now the tattoo
Slips from the bugles for swift way in air,
Seeking the echo of the unseen hills,
Bidding to sleep. So finds the play its end.
The stage has vanished, as all stages do,
Swift in the dark. The boards where Sambo pranced
Are back into the wagons, and the lamps
Are ready for the next dance by the guns
When Johnny comes of night, and all the host
That roared before the stage slips to the earth
For the good sleep of merry weariness,
The best that soldier knows. Three drum-taps ring,
The lights wink out, and all our world is still,
Save for the distant shout where sentry hails
The wary captains, who search well the lines
To see the ward is good.
Such is a host
Swinging across the earth to smite its foe
With hardened legions. Yea, the might of men
Is 'neath his banners in that forward march
Straight to far purposes ; yet, would ye see

The greater majesty of fearful war,
Go seek it in the sleeping camp where lies
A nation's strength awaiting day's return
To bid it forth to death. There on the earth
In ordered lines a hundred thousand men
Beside their arms betake them to God's peace;
Turn for a while in dreams to far-off homes,
To happiness that they have made a dream
That duty's part be done. Walk down those lines,
Knowing this sleep presages that to come,
When in like order they shall rest for aye
At end of all this battle — with the Lord,
Merged in His host beneath the waiting earth.
Here lies a grizzled fellow on whose face
The watching moon shows touch of tears that came
Ere weariness bore weary sorrow down
Into forgetfulness; and here the callow lad
Who was the wicked damsel in the play,
Full of side-splitting antics, light as air,
Sobbing his heartache with his face to earth.
Here a fair youth that day made for its joy,
To send its radiance into childhood's eyes,
Starts from his sleep and wildly looks afar
Into the night, moaning a woman's name;
His troubled neighbours roar their brutal gibes
Until he wakes and flings him back to earth
To lie as with the dead. So on and on
Ye may review the host and see them all —
The shipwrecked of life's deep, the castaways,

Who watch the hopeless sea for lift of sail
Until their lives go out. For in the march
The brutal shape 's atop and hides the man
From neighbours, — yea, himself, — so that we know
Naught but his commonplace, the rags he wears
To hide his shamefaced splendour; but this night
Ye see this hardened villain that in sun
Was sinner fit for Satan, know in him
That mortal hopelessness, the very pit
Where fate may grave the soul. Yea, as in death,
The man who looks up into loving eyes
Clean of earth's foulness, as if glad to tell
To world he parts from what was in him hid
Of God's nobility, so in this slumbering host,
Empured in night's still spaces, we may read
What 's writ upon the souls all hid by day,
That lifteth men above the realm of clods;
See in this stalking horror clad in arms,
Lit on by banners, glamoured by the love
Of feebleness for strength and fear for deeds
Of all-inspiring valour, Satan herds
His troops to nether Hell.
And now the lark
Leaps from the flaring trumpets swift away
To hills and hearts of men, and echo finds
Alike in both, for morn is ever morn,
With hope to lift the curtains and good joy
To usher in the pageant of the day.
The sorrow of the darkness is forgot,

And e'en the sorest heart knows why birds sing.
Swift all 's made ready for the onward march,
And ere the sun hath swept above the hills
The legions swing them forth in ordered lines.
So on and on the days soar up to noon
And stoop down into night, until the earth,
Burnt by stark drought, is now like Afric sands,
A famished realm where they must thirsting go,
Dreaming of springs, of streams where heaven sends
Its glorious plenty. Yea, 't is hard to thirst
Over a land that hath within it hid
The wine of life; to know that 'neath your feet
In cavern arches vast and cool and still
Are noble founts that idly flow to sea,
Leaving your life to starve. The pioneers
With pick and powder break way to those caves,
Searching those hidden springs, till 'hap they look
Into those wondrous spaces where the deep
Hath shaped its temples to the unseen God,
Cathedrals vast that ne'er have known the tread
Of weary sinners, nor have heard the cry
To Him that stills all thirst. Far in those fanes
Veiled by the stalactites they find a stream
That flows forever; quick a line is made
From the dark portal down into the deep,
And swift the buckets pass so all may taste
Once more that blessed drink and hie them on
As famished as before.
                                        The march is hard

When earth 's at best, when in the laden fields
Is plenty for the taking, and clear streams
Plash from their fonts across each mile of way,
Where you may drink your thirsty fill and thank
The Lord who sendeth thirst and for it springs.
That half a hundred weight, a soldier's gear,
Is little to a beast, but to a man
A sore accursèd load, that bears him down
As he tramps out the path to horizon
Whereto his soul doth bid him. Where he fares
Sore-footed, tortured from his head to heels,
A plodding brute who does his master's will:
Asks but to know his way. Yea, hard at best
When sky bows down to bless; but when the arch
Is of this brass that spans a desert earth
With all its pastures withered back to dust,
It is but blundering quest of weary men
For place where they may die. Here every morn
Brings day more famished than the yesterday;
Here cattle, who know well the hidden springs
In shadowed dells and where in parchèd streams
There bides last pool, or where the lush grass stays,
Moan out their life. See there beside the way
Where was a lakelet full unto the brim,
Set round with lilies, now a filthy pit,
Mud-rimmed, with but a centre patch of ooze,
And in that festering mire the shapes of men
Who crept into it with the thirst they know

Who bleed of mortal wounds; crept in to drown,
Their longing unassuaged.
We'll now away
For wider sight of that broad field of war.
Come to yon butte, that in its castled steep
Enwalls a far-up plain — land fit to be
Acropolis to 'fend the realm it crowns
Against the wide world's siege. It is the wreck
Of ancient land that once stood in this air
High as the summit; all else gone to the deep
Upon the ceaseless march of earth that goes
In the vast pageant trooping to the sea.
From this still, far-up place, so high and lone
That never beast hath trod it, where but wings
Seek for a resting-place, we now look forth
Over the war-worn plain and see how man
Mimics his Maker in the rage to send
What is down to the deep, to wreck fair lands
That new may from their dust arise. Afar
The sun of morning glimmers through the dust
That hides its face. There, fifty miles away,
On weary roads the foe is hastening south
To 'scape the stroke that else the morrow brings
From Buell on his flank. Here at our feet
Tramp on the myriads of our mighty host,
Striving to win the vantage in the game,
Dust-wrapped as is the foe, for burnt-up earth
At tread of foot dissolves in burnt-up air.
Hear that vast clank of wheels and beat of hoofs,

The lashing whips that goad the flagging teams,
Curses and cries that spur the weary men
To wear away the miles that we may come
Timely to give the stroke; 't is so we win
To save the commonwealth, right on through Hell.
Thus o'er the desert, once the fairest land
That ever lent its substance to man's need,
As mother breast to child, these armies swing,
Searching for chance to smite. Here on this steep,
Parted from all that turmoil by the peace
That dwells within the spaces, we would stay
To wait the silence that will come full soon
When all that tumult hath swept on around
The arch of weary earth: here wait until
The sky doth send its rain and life comes back
Unto this stricken wild. But we must on,
On with those masters till we scan their deeds
In all their fell completeness.
Still for days
And still for nights this torment racketh on.
Earth is a furnace, sky a lambent flame,
Hearts are but cinders, and those shapes of men
Cased in the sweat and dust are mummies old
From Egypt's graves, where never cometh rain
To loose them back to earth. The fields are fire;
On them no man can rest until he 's dead.
The soldiers dig the brittle sod away
And lie within the pits as in their graves.
They stretch them on the harness or the guns,

Hew down the sapless trees, and on the boughs
Find blessed shelter from once welcome ground.
The bivouac we saw where merriment
Cloaked well its sorrow, and where blessed sleep
Came like the dew to fresh the souls of men,
Hath now but darkness where a ceaseless moan
Goes forth unto the night.
                                        Still forth they send,
Those changeless pipes of brass, their shout of morn:
So for the ages on they 've called to men —
"Upon your feet all ye who are not dead,
Here is a day for duty ere ye die!"
So forth they stagger, wondering how it comes
They are not with the blessed who sleep on
Waiting that other trump — how 't is that man
Tramps on when life is out. There is no more
Of blessed comradeship that balms all hurts
With hand and heart. Each in himself is sealed
By overmastering pain. Each stumbles on,
And if his comrade falls, steps over him
As if he crossed a stone. For 't is the time
When all the man is worn out, and there stays
Naught but the primal brute within the hulk,
That ancient might that bears the soldier on
As an automaton. Yea, they 're the dead
Who've strangely missed their graves.
                                                    'T is now high noon
Of that last terror God meant for a day;
Those starvèd beasts are silent as the dead —

There ring no more commands to spur them on —
And yet they onward surge as swings the shot,
Though might that hurled it forth is echo now.
Then through the host there sweeps a tide of hope,
A rumour such as wildly springs in throngs,
Born of their hunger, or now strangely guessed
By senses hid from man while he is man,
But native to the brute that he is now,
In battle for dear life. 'T is that there 's hid
Beyond yon wood that stretches to the sky
A sometime river, and within its bed
The pools for which they pant. The officers
Catch quick the rumour — know the host will break
As maddened beasts straightway unto their quest;
Know that the column will become a rout,
With chance of planted foe beside that stream.
Swiftly they swing the corps to right and left,
Shaping a battle order so they 'll on
Formed for the stroke, if need of stroke is there;
Then for a hard rush forward to the goal,
Inhuman, blind, as when the buffalo,
Long famished in the blasted prairies, scent
In the all-holding air the breath of stream
And rage unto it. So, new life in heart,
The host breaks through the wood in open lines,
Wave upon wave, confusèd as in flight,
Looking a rabble, yet a rout that shapes
Swiftly to battle front at bugle's call.
The dried earth crackles 'neath their hurrying feet;

The tangles break before them. 'T is a wild
That since the primal ne'er hath known of man
Save when the lonely hunter silent crept
Upon those ancient trails deep worn in earth,
Carved by the feet of many a vanished kind,
Mammoth and mastodon, whose footprints showed
Way to the gentle deer. This shade hath known
Ages of flight and chase in myriad shapes,
Of brutal hunger and o'ermastering fear,
But never yet this demon might of man
In the rude front of war. While swift our host
Sweeps through this ancient forest, as the tide
Through the sea grass and tangles, onward borne
By vast compulsion of the far-off orbs
Unto its destiny, its mighty foe,
In a like torment fighting hard for life,
Hath caught the hope of succour in the vale—
Of drink in Chaplin's Fork. They too strive on,
Uncaring that they front the arms they 've sought
To 'scape by marches hard. For in each burns
The thirst that he must slake — yea, if he drinks
From Charon's boat on way across the Styx.

So nears the last act of this tragedy,
Where armies are the actors and the scene
This ancient wilderness, wherein they tread
Swift to the finish. Let us look away
To see the stage where all this action ends:
The wood is wide, unbroken save for vale

Where, 'mid a strip of fields, the shrunken stream
Trickles as tiny spring from pool to pool,
Fed from the caverns in the nearby hills —
A little island of fertility
Set in that weary, famished, war-trod waste,
Fenced by that forest from marauding bands
And from the hostile sky by sunny springs,
That deep earth sends to-day. See, there are homes
Unstricken yet, with children by their doors,
And pastures where are sheep, and kine yet know
The goodness of earth's pastures: it is noon,
So they are gathered 'neath the arching trees
Or belly-deep in pools; drowse where the shade
Of the great rocks gives harbour from the sun.
Yea, 't is an isle of peace that breaks the sea,
Set in its wilderness as that far height
Whence we looked forth upon the rage that went
A day ago unto its near won goal.
See in that little valley where a spring,
Slipping from 'neath a crag, endows a field
With all that deeps above and deeps below
May give to bit of earth, a cabin stands,
Built of well-shapen logs that tell the care
Of builder who had love within his heart
And shaped of it a home. It is girt in
By blossoms, kinds that have for ages sent
Their kiss to eyes of women for the care
That gave to them the day; so have they won
From our dear mothers of a thousand years

Abiding loveliness; yea, as the bees
The ages on have shaped the world of blooms
From primal nothingness until it looks
Content upon the stars, these mistresses
Of the old hives of men have wrought these cups
To be the chalices whence we drink love,
Unknowing how immortal love hath shaped
The wine and cup for us.
A woman stands
Amid the morning-glories with her babe
Pressed to her heart, as she would stay the fear
That dwells in her sad eyes as far away
She hearkens to the roar that onward comes
Like tramp of surge that fronts a mighty tide
Clamouring unto the land. First in the east
Far as the horizon the thunder beats,
Then in the west it rumbles from the wood,
Now dim and muffled like the quake of air
Out of great organ pipes before the wind
Hath waked their cadences: swiftly they change
To the vast tumult of on-striving hosts,
The cry of bugles, thunder of rude wheels,
The captains shouting, and the roar of men
Who look to near won goal. See in the east
From out the woods that crest the gentle hills
Leap the forerunning of the avalanche,
The skirmishers, who, finding naught of foe,
Dash forward on the run. And then the line
Of the great thirsting host sweeps like the leaves

Before the wind. Bowed, hungry-eyed, they go
Like famished beasts and hurl them at the stream
In the fierce lust of thirst. What was a might
Of ordered legions that no storm of war
Could break to tumult now 's a maddened throng
That surges to the pools. The first who come
And cast them down to drink are trodden o'er
By the insensate mob that rushes on;
Yet in a moment comes the bugle call
That wakes the soldier, swings him to his place
To bide the order. Swiftly guards are set
Over the precious founts, and details fill
The canteens from the pools. Each has his share,
A moment's slake of that devouring thirst
The sea would hardly quench. Then as good life
Comes back into their hearts, they look away
Over that oasis and dream of homes
They left enwrapped in peace in Georgia's hills,
Or Alabama's vales.
Yea, as they gaze
Upon that lonely woman with her babe
Held close to heart, they yearn to far away
And are for time as men. She idly looks
A moment on that host, then unto the wood
That stretches to the west. As yet 't is still
In its vast shadowy spaces where the sight
Sweeps through the towering arches of the trees
From day unto the dark. Then o'er the domes
Of the great fane she sees the birds stream up

In flocks unto the sky, and from the way
That leads unto its shade leaps forth a doe,
With fawn beside her, chased by panic fear;
Within the sunlight it a moment stays,
Looks wildly on the throng and back to wood,
Then, as it saw to hope, straight on it goes
Unto the woman, who with touch of hand
Gives silent welcome while she looks afar.
Then comes a throng of 'wildered beasts that flee,
Swayed by like fear, unto the open fields
From wonted coverts, seeking with the flocks
Of sheep or cattle refuge in their plight.
The freshened soldiers set them on the hunt,
But quick the leaders read those omens true,
And know a battle-line sweeps through that wild.
The bugles flare, and ready drums whir out
The assembly call, and swift the adjutants
Order the lines to meet what on them comes.
Quick to each point of vantage haste the guns
Unto the hills and gates of forest ways,
And back of them the grey-ranked infantry,
Dun as volcanic ashes. On the flanks
Gather the troopers, with their squadrons set
For 'whelming charge upon a stricken foe,
Or for the stroke that halts his victory.
It is a splendour, grimmest of this earth,
Such ordered might that bides the coming storm,
Silent, unfearing, trusting to the Lord
And to the brother's faith; with hearts that turn

From sight of waiting death to far-off homes,
Where bide their loved ones — bide and hope and pray
Until the night shuts down. Yet with keen eyes
And ears attuned they set them to their task,
Hearkening the rage of that on-coming sea
That 'hap shall 'whelm them. Now it roars afar —
A mingled sound of myriad feet that break
Way through the forest tangle; captains' shouts
Who strive to shape the host; wild cries of men
Who see the glimmer of the open day
Peer through the forest gates. Now forth it leaps,
That tide of blue, broken as is the sea
Striven through reef and tangle to the shore —
Sweeps far into the open, sees the foe
Ranked for hard welcome. Then across the vale
Swiftly the mastering orders swing that rout
Back to the forest verge for well-closed lines,
Whereon the stillness of the spacious realm
Comes as a shadow down. How oft the sun
Hath looked upon this scene, where earth's good fields,
Clad in His harvests, wait the rush of hosts
To trample ruin where He plenty sends,
And change dear homes to shambles! Look your last
Upon this realm of peace that quick deep Hell
Shall gather to its fold. There still are homes
Where frightened women strive to hush the wail
Of children in whose hearts the olden fear —
The primal demon — springs. There yet are flocks
That look unto those roof-trees for good ward

From ancient peril; blossoms love hath shaped
Unto their beauty. Still the matron stands,
Babe clasped to heart, and crouching by her side
The doe and fawn — twin mothers in this wild
Where God and man have bade them wait for death.
She looks away as shipwrecked for a sail
Over the 'wildered sea, as if she knew
Amid those myriads there was one to stay
Her heart in its sore ail. Those stern men look
As men have looked, the hapless ages on,
Upon the abodes of peace they are to stamp
Beneath their ruthless feet — yea, they are still
Before that Satan's altar that awaits
The innocence it is their part to slay.
They are the Devil's priests, yet they are men
With hearts bowed down 'fore what he bids them do,
Chained to his service by the will of God,
In those strange gyves he forges for the souls
That seek his purposes.
Now comes the cry
From out the trumpets — hard, insensate shout
That wakes the demon in the hearts of men,
Sending that wave of blue adown the slope.
Swift from the east the cannon answer, hail
With shell and shrapnel that arch high in air,
And swoop as hawks to quarry. From the west
O'er the on-rushing wave our cannoneers
Send like swift message, telling earth and sky
That Hell is once more master of their world.

Now in a moment all the vale is wrapped
Beneath a pall, as if those brutal guns
Would from the heavens hide the work they do
At bidding of their lords.
                                        Let us not seek
To scan that torment; men may do this task
That Satan sets them, yet live on as men;
For the hot breath of action sweeps them past
The horror of their deeds, to leave them far
In the still spaces with their souls assoiled.
But he who looks on battle with still heart,
Watching the eddies of its fiery tides
And reckoning their sweep, goes to the deep
And shares its curse with Satan. Let us go
For soul's empuring back into the wood,
Where silent majesties lift up to sky
Their offerings of peace and 'neath their arms
Keep the eternal shelter. 'T is a step,
And that volcanic roar is far away;
The cannon's thunder and the muskets' crash,
The maddened cry of men who close for stroke
Straight at each other's hearts, are as the hum
Of whirring spindles and the throb of looms
Where legions spin and weave. Or where afar
Comes chaunt of distant waters hastening down
From the far hills into the waiting sea,
Or hum of bees that tend their ordered hives
And harvest summer for their winter's cheer.
For in this primal temple all is shaped

Unto enduring song to hail the Lord,
Though He hide far away. See, here 's a nest
Of mother partridge with her speckled eggs,
Each with its miracle of life to be
Hid in its tiny sphere. The mother comes
Back from her flight with chirp to her unborn
To tell them danger 's by. And there 's a hill
Of ants that build their ordered commonwealth
Deep in the earth and frame it to live on
In stately shapeliness and during peace.
Still from the valley sweeps the far-off hum,
That throb of shuttle and the spindles' whir:
Yon world of men is living as is this
With the hard tasks of life.
Lean down thy ear
Upon this earth, so dry it seems as dust;
Hark there the murmurs sweep — as in a shell
We 've picked up on the shore and listen to
For wondrous tale of sea — of far down springs,
Of far up branches swaying in the wind,
And deeper yet the song of mother earth
In glad expectancy of her great womb:
The far down thunder of the mighty toil
That shapes the lands to be, faint tinkling notes
Of merry atoms as they dance away
To find their place in garners where they wait
As gold, or precious stones, or wondrous ores,
That shall at touch of hand spring forth to serve
The need of men to come. In all that realm

We know the Master's will, the Mother's love
Shaping for life to be.
                                        Still from the vale
Sways up that other song, so strangely set
In its wild dissonance 'gainst this of earth,
As angels' choir 'gainst that which roareth forth
From the dark gates into the senseless void.
See in that sunlit space are moths that dance
Their weddings in the air. Each filmy thing
Hath in its shape the life that ages on
The mighty Mother 's bred to bear her love
And fruit in joy. When the twain lives are joined
And the fair seed sent to good winter's care,
They vanish in the dark. So on and on
Forever goes the jocund round of day
In this primeval. — Lend again to earth
Thine ear and hearken once again the song.
'T is now from dust that once had shape in man,
Whereto the dear life comes for memory
Past all its wanderings in God's wide realm,
So lit with noble stars ; 't is but a moan —
Yea, far away and faint, and yet so clear :
" Dear brothers of the day, bide in its light
And shape it to life's raiment 'gainst the cold
Of the deep spaces past the darkened gate,
Where winter numbs the naked, who fare on
As heedless wanderers who have no store
From His all-giving sun. Come not as we
Unto the Boundless, paupers to the throne,

To see the happier, vestured in His love
And winged with mercy, hie them to their task
Of shaping for His will."
Now yonder vale
Stills in the gloaming, so we 'll turn us back
Unto our brethren, seeing to the end
Of the great tragedy, — the end that came
While in this nearby wood the ancient stage
Had love upon it in the noble play
Of life that knows the deeps of earth and sky:
How good e'en death at end of those fair days
The Lord doth bid it to.
Ah, what is here?
Forth from the portal of the wood we look
Over the valley to the further hills,
Upon a scene we know not. All is changed:
As that fair city by the southern sea,
Trusting the deeps, slept 'neath its arching palms
Until the demon smote it, so those fields,
And all they bore, have vanished in the scorch
Of war's volcanic breath. Where stood fair homes
Are smouldering ash-heaps; where embattled hosts,
The scorchèd earth is flecked as by the leaves
After an autumn gale — those ragged bits
That once were men. How still and flat they lie!
For when the life is out, 't is but a dot
Upon the earth that living was a king.
So from the portal of the wood. But on
With all thou hast of soul to stay thy heart —

Steel-tempered mind that takes this living woe
As if it were the deed of far-off days,
Washed out by tears and faded to a tale
That stirs our hearts but stirs them languidly —
For nearer view of what shall scorch thy heart
With sight of what is man. See, now we come
Where lie the first that fell, rent by the shells
As forward leapt the charge. They are but few —
Mayhap three score — that counts not in a fight.
The foe aimed high; it needed tenfold that
To stay the rush and hurl the remnant back.
Yet they 've one gunner who can train a piece,
For in this heap that was a man and horse —
Now a strange medley they must grave as one —
See, there are epaulettes that bear a star.
This shows good practice, for a shot like that
Will often shake a charge that would not mind
Chance whack on one in five: the man should have
His shoulder-straps for it. 'T is but two hours
Since these men laid them down; yet here they lie
As if they 'd lain forever in their sleep,
So parted are they from the glorious day,
So far within the night. Now there 's a space
Where leapt the charge unscathèd by the fire,
With here and there the fleck where some stout man,
Slain with his comrades, battled on with death
That he might die with flag near to the foe,
Or 'hap when life was out he was swept on
In the great surge as wave sweeps on a stone.

We see just here that Johnny lost the range
For twenty seconds — that the best will do:
When Satan on you comes, the steadiest
Have eyes that blink the sights and fingers thumbs,
In the nice business of laying gun.
But here is plenty: see, so quickly strewn
That for broad acres of this trampled corn
You must step warily, or else you 'll tread
Upon some bit that once knew it a man,
That squirms beneath your feet unpleasantly.
Now for some furlongs' breadth they lie so close
They 'd serve as stepping-stones across a stream
Wide as the Mississippi at its flood.
You see that here the muskets did their work —
Great guns are but as toys until the charge
Is on their mouths, and double canister
As a tornado sweeps the host in air.
The most are still, but here and there one writhes
To free him from the dead that bear him down,
So he have chance to draw at least the breath
That sends him to the spaces. You would help
To lift his burthens from him? Nay, good man,
'T is but a drop you 'd save from this wide sea.
He 'll find the way out sooner if he lies
There as he fell. Yea, even now he goes
To join his brethren. And here lies a lad
In Johnny's ragged grey: a shapely boy,
Scarce half-way through his teens. See in his hand
A letter clutchèd still — 't was his last thought

That passer-by should send it on its way.
There you can help. To Mistress So-and-So,
Sure it is for his mother. Here 'll be truce
For pick and spade work, so you 'll have the chance
To send the story to her ; nay, better leave
The poor heart to its hope for yet a day:
Mayhap 't will quench in hunger 'fore it knows
The hand that wrote is still.
                                        Here is a place
Where charge met counter charge; you see it well,
For here the mingled flecks of blue and grey
Are flattened down ; stamped into sunbaked earth
By myriad feet, as to and fro the hordes
Swung in the fearful rush. And strangely here
White patches blotched with crimson, where we tread
Softly as on a velvet matted floor
Wherein the foot sinks with luxurious ease.
Look close — they are the sheep that pastured here,
Dear emblems of His peace. And now we come
Upon a battery that followed up
To stay our charge and send the cleaving strokes
Upon the foeman's lines. Six weary guns,
Mere wreckage : four with mouths to earth,
And two that stay on shattered carriages.
Between and under is a tangled heap
That quivers here and there, and in the midst,
'Twixt two that stand, their captain face to sky,
A lanyard in each hand, that tells he stood
Last of the company, then hied away

In fiery chariot with comrades brave,
Whom he blew from his guns.
We 've trodden far,
And 't is a rugged path, such battled field,
Where swift the soul wears out; yet we will on
To see the finish of it: 'mid this woe,
'T will not be hard to die of weariness
And the heart sickening that doth beg for peace,
For all the hard mask that the soldier wears
Looking upon his work. Here are the pools
Whereunto strove the hosts, and here they lie
At the won goal as drift-wood on the banks
Where raging flood is by: a heapèd wreck.
There in the channel they are strewn so thick
That the on-creeping stream scarce oozes through
The cumbering mounds. Upon the further slope
Where stood the line of grey there lies a ridge
Skirting the path of stream, yea, as a wall,
To show how like a rampart living stood
The ranks were here laid down.
So far the tale
Writ in these shapes that in the noonday were
The best the sun e'er lifted from the dust
To fashion for earth's glory. Another waits
For those who hapless 'scaped to bear this woe
Until 't is wearied down. Theirs the sore task
To shape this ruin so the morrow's sun
May look upon the living, fit to do
Like work before it sets. They 're swift at it:

A thousand bearers tread in ordered lines,
As might the harvesters, across those fields.
They scan and turn each heap with surgeon care
To find a life to save. 'T is gently done
With a rude skill, for well the veteran
Learns when the man may live, when he must die.
So they tread onward, leaving many there
Who plead for succour, for they know right well
The great Leech waits beside them. See them lift
That mangled shape upon the stretcher's bed
As tender mother careth for hurt child,
Twist up the tourniquets, and trot away
In careful haste to where the surgeons ply
Their fearful task of saving. In an hour
They 'll glean the living from this field of dead,
Yet leave it laden even as 't is now.

The sunset dies, but 't is the harvest moon
That tends belated toil in all those fields
Where happy folk haste in the summer's yield
For winter's store. See there, how full and round
Swings up that glory in the eastern sky.
We know it stark and cold, a senseless thing,
Save that it hath its light from during sun
That by it sends here greeting and good help
To those who labour on until their task,
However sore, be done. There in the fields
Upon the battle's verge a weary throng,
Worn nigh to death, are delving in hard earth

The trenches for the dead. They may not wait
The morrow for the task, for with the day
Hard duty rides to bid them on the march
Or to new battle-lines. Yea, and the sun
Hath duty too by those poor bits of clay
That best be done beneath the sheltering earth —
The goodly office that sends back the dust
To the vast store that feeds the life to be,
Yet scanty for the need; that we deem vile
Because it rends our shapes and those we love,
And leaves but memory of all that 's been.
We will to them and see this harvest home.

How bowed and still they are who do this task!
Save as the picks thump in unwilling ground,
Or shovels ring upon the flints, 't is still
As though 't was spectre's work. The trench begun,
Swiftly the bearers lay their burthens in
Close side by side, with faces to the sky,
And in such order as their mangled limbs
May take from kindly hands. As they are laid
The fillers make the finish; steadily,
Yet with eyes turned away, they ply their task,
With wonder if the morrow they 're to lie
In a like grave. The most the bearers bring
Are sorry shreds of what were once stout men:
For when the life-tide 's out, the shapeliest
Are shrivelled up as seed-pods when they 've done
Their fitting part. Yet now they bear a form —

One of those seldom whom death cannot smite
Out of nobility; yea, he looks to sky
As if he faced the deep as should a man
Who knows his Maker's image is in him
Deathless forever; and as those toilers stay
Before that majesty, their task forgot,
One goes swift unto it and casts him down,
Moaning, on that still heart. You see how like
The living and the dead: you know the rest
As though 't was fairly writ. His comrades take
The brother from his dead, and we fare on,
Leaving the toilers to their ancient task.
And as we wander aimless as the air,
With step aside to let the burthens pass,
And idle look at some new shape of death
That starts from out the dusk beside our way,
We happen on the ruin of that house
Where stood the woman clasping babe to heart,
When age ago we went into the wood
To save our souls from Hell. All is away
That gave it glory when we looked before:
The flowers trampled as all else to earth
That iron feet can batter heedless down.
Upon the very threshold lie the dead,
And 'neath them, dead, the mother doe and fawn
That sought there shelter — else we might not know
This shot-rent, blackened charnel-house the home
Where love had made its nest. We enter in:
The door is wide — we need not stay to knock,

For from the place all sanctities are gone,
Chased forth by shames. It may be that this roof
Under its dark will give us chance to rest
Our weary eyes from that which lies without
Beneath the harvest moon. See on the hearth
Amid the embers flickers yet the fire
About the vessels set for noonday meal.
By it a woman crouches, lone and still,
With babe to her bared breast. She heeds us not:
Were we the Lord or Satan, she would heed
Naught but the woe that slays her; so we stray,
As he who trod with Virgil step by step,
To scan those circles — looked down in the pit
That lies the deepest from the light of sun,
With frozen heart and limbs that would not stir
For all his will to flee. Yea, what's without
Is day to this black night that here shuts in
This lonely woman bowed beside the hearth
That was her altar, hapless, innocent,
Smote by the wrath of God. Now comes a stir
To break the silence — measured march of feet,
As those who bear a burthen; carefully
They lift it to the bed, — her marriage bed, —
The bed where came her babe unto her heart.
They straighten out the shape and cross the hands,
Weigh down the staring eyes — those helpless deeds
Men do to one who passes. Then they go
Forth to their toil without a spoken word,
As if this world was by the time for speech.

She heeded not their coming — knew it not —
Nor of their going. Yea, but now she heeds,
As if that presence called her. Then she looks,
And fixedly, upon the dead, as if
She had come back from far; she slowly goes,
Lays her dead babe beside him, wipes away
The blood upon its lips. Then she lifts up,
Looks forth into the dark as if she saw
In the Almighty's face, with right to scan,
This foul pretence of mercy, justice, help,
Sent to His servants of this stricken earth,
And then she falls, the life out, to the floor.
We lift her carefully and lay her down
Beside him and the child; we see her breast
Is riven by the shot that slew her child,
But that she waited, hoping to the end,
As women wait their loved. This is the end.

Come forth and shut the door; step heedfully,
For yet the way is cumbered. Though we see
The harvesters are flitting with their loads
Unto the garners, else this world is still, —
Save for the thump of picks and clods that fall
Upon the upturned faces, all is still, —
Sleeping with stars to watch and summer moon,
Full-orbed and glorious, pregnant with the love
That lovers see in her. — "Nay, 't is a lie,
A pretty trick to cheat us to our graves
And cast us in them helpless at the end,

Setting this world with seemings of a God
Where there bides only Satan. Past that door
Is answer to all prophets in those dead
Who tell this earth is shame." "Nay, good friend,
Here we tread on with Satan masked as man,
But with the sun up comes the Lord to chase
That demon from the world. So ages on
Ormuzd and Ahriman, in joy and woe,
In love and hate, circle the sphere around.
Yea, every orb that spins hath day and night,
And some lack moons to tell that day endures
Beyond the darkened round. Thus on they go,
For eons on, dark smiting love and hope,
Slaying God's angels as within yon door.
So shall it be until the hearts of men —
Men of this earth or men of farthest star —
Give judgement in this trial; cast their swords
In one or other of these balanced scales,
And Ahriman or Ormuzd to the deep!
We may not doubt the end. That 's but a sham,
A vagrant fancy, that finds in this Hell
Else than its fiery blackness — clings to hope
When reason bids despair. Let us be men
With hearts for it, nor palter with the truth,
The sorry remnant of the good we dreamed
The heritage of man."
So we go on,
Stirring the silence with our witless tongues,
As men so oft have gone in battled fields,

With souls all hopeless crying to the deeps
And vainly hearking to their emptiness. And as we go,
With night-wrapped hearts that wait for glint of morn,
A shadow comes o'er moon; midway in sky
Front of another battle, vaster yet
Than Satan sets on earth — these legions swing
Swift mustered from the sea and sent away
In marshalled hosts to sweep upon the lands.
It is a mighty order; 'fore its front
Stream out the skirmishers that swift explore
The empty spaces of the desert air
As if they sought a foe, and then the line
Of lurid blackness, as a fortress wall
With towered steeps and heights impregnable
As the enduring night, from past the stars
Were marching 'gainst the realm of things create.
Now from its ramparts forth the lightnings spring,
Waking to thunder all the over realms,
Stroke upon stroke to mock the wrath of man.
See there one falls as plummet from the sky;
Not like its fellows in swift, zigzag search
For place to smite, but as a messenger
Straightway to do His service. Straight its way
Unto that cot, an instant glory there,
And then swift flames that tell the stroke went true
Unto its bidding and its task is done.
So opened heaven's vista in that night
Unto our souls, and then its blessed rain
Came with tumultuous joy to kiss the earth

Again to loveliness. — Oh, 't is long gone,
But those who lived that night out, and who look
Yet to the dark, have glory in old eyes
Burnt there as that wild tempest swept away
Death from a stricken land. Yea, they know well
How in that storm the rivers roaring came
From out the hills upon their way to sea:
How all that tortured bit of earth was healed
With floods that smoothed its graves and sent its wreck
Swift to the waiting deep. And now our host,
Caged by the raging streams, drinks deep, and knows
How good is earth to be on, yea, how good
To all who win their way out of that night.

Ay, it is long ago; near all are dead
Who trod that march and field — or friend or foe
There found their graves in peace, and this hard world
Has shaken 'neath the tramp of other hosts,
And other women have clasped babe to breast
In a like agony; and oft the moon,
Helping to noble harvest, lit good fields
Where Satan reaped; and hopeful years have lent
Blossoms to deck their graves. Love shapes its nests
Swift from hard ruin; so the sparrows build
Of winter's wreck good cradles for their chicks,
And men shape waste of battles to uplift
Hope to new life. See on that stricken earth
How brave the harvests hold up to the sun,
Ripening for men to be, and all this air

That throbbed with battle is now won to song,
As sweet and low as mother's lullaby
That hushes her babe's sleep to gentle dreams;
Chaunting forever to the hearts of men
Of valour that claimed death so men might live
Upon a bettered earth. And as we list that hymn,
Up comes the round of silent harvest moon
Over the eastern hills, and far we see
The bearers with their burthens of ripe corn,
Great laden wains that creep unto the barns,
While happy weariness beside them goes.
And there a mother gives her breast to babe,
By fireside where the smoking supper waits
His coming home. — Yea, this old world is young.
Its age and villainy are but the mask
Of youth and love eternal, and its dust
But seed that waits to spring — seed in the earth,
Deep hidden there with death, invisible
Save to the eye of God, until it lifts
Once more from earth to sky. Take from the store
A handful — search it through: all seems decay —
Mere wreck of things that were, that silent goes
Back to mere emptiness of common dust.
But lay it in the sun and let the dew
Descend upon it, then it's all alive
With might that soars to beauty, full of gems
That hid them from the day that they might wait
For day's good service at the call of God.

TOLD IN THE DARK

Years after, when the graves were smoothed and green
We saw new-laid at Perryville, and those
Who took their shearing there had gone forth shorn
Of this or that of limb to do man's part
With what the Lord had left them, by a chance
Upon a stage-top, drowsing through the dark
'Mid Cordilleran hills, two veterans met, —
Ex-Johnny and ex-Yank, — and in the way
Of those who talk in night, half-musingly,
More to the spaces than attending ears, —
For there 's no face to check with questionings
And keep us to the commonplace of days, —
They came on ancient quest of how a man
May find his way out when he is against
The outer blackness. Then once more was told
The tale of captain who, amid his guns,
His men all dead, his pieces gone save two,
Fell face to earth, drawn lanyard in each hand,
And so went forth on well-attended way.
Then from the dark the Johnny capped that tale:
"Yes, 't was at Chaplin's Fork. I saw it done,
For I was there before you. It was when
We were with Cheatham, and we rushed those guns.
Three times we tried it: thrice they tossed us back —
What did not go in air to rattle down

In chunks and rags upon the men behind.
It 's bad enough to have the front ranks slip,
When you must stumble past; but when they fly
Down on your head in pieces, it seems tough,
And you are middling likely to light out.
This time we waited for full half an hour,
While twenty guns were whacking at his six.
'T was near enough to see they pounded hard.
Two pieces to the right and two to left
Were knocked to flinders. All his men lay still —
And they warn't possuming. So on we went,
This time for certain, for his game was up —
We 'd break their line and win. But when we came
To home stretch in our run with not a sign
Of life in all that outfit, up he rose
Upon his knees, that chap, between the guns
That still stood in the centre. In each hand
He held a lanyard, so we knew his game.
Three times before we 'd faced it, — gone right on
Until we went up blazing; but the sight
Of that tough captain on his knees was worse
Than all his hundred dancing. It 's black dark, —
You can't see heads of wheelers; but I see
That fellow kneeling, white-faced as a ghost,
His head bent forward, and his blazing eyes,
When, fifty yards away, with all our shot
Whacked straight at him, he tumbled; but he pulled
Both lanyards true, and half our company
Skipped in the fiery chariot. When 't was done,

We turned him over — what was left of him.
He did n't bleed — he 'd been dead half an hour,
But waited for his escort. We forgot
What we went there for — did n't do the trick
Of right and left, to flank the broken line,
But drifted back worse beaten than before.
To have a dead man whack you 's mighty queer;
You 're good for nothing till you 've had a sleep —
If he will let you have it. So you see,
A dead man with the Devil can do more
Than most who think they 're living, if he 's got
The righteous stuff in him." Thus, from the dark,
The ancient Johnny phrased it — not so high
Or wide as you would shape it, yet as true
Unto this rude world's needs.

THE CHANGE OF FRONT

HOTCHKISS' STORY

It is at Fredericksburg: the battle 's raged
From dawn till dark and on from dark till day.
We Johnnies have a job to hold our line
'Gainst overlapping — task for wits and heels
Five times our force; but we have both for that,
For Stonewall Jackson 's here. Now comes the word
That o'er the Rappahannock, on the east,
A force is crossing for stroke on that flank:
Sent home, we 'd have to scuttle. Jackson 's checked
Like game upon our right, and now his men
Catch breath and chance of victual. They must march
Straight for this peril; for we 've no reserves
For swift, sure work. Quick they are afoot,
And pawing off those ten miles with the swing
That beats the double-quick of his keen soul —
He on the very front, as is his way.
Two hours and he 's there to find it was feint,
Already blown away. So he must back
Where business was doing on the left,
As told his soldier's sense. So right about
The column swings to bugle, and the ranks
Of eager hearts surge back without a word
Or growl for wasted toil, for well they know

They are his men in body and in soul.
Each hath his glory, knowing well that he
Is of a majesty. But with the change
The front 's now three miles off, and so old Jack
Plunges o'er fields and fences, with his staff
Lumbering behind him, to the leader's post,
Where eyes may know of danger. As he rides,
Bobbing like jockey, all the column halts,
Finding it comic, roaring out the fun
That tops all reverence: "Come in, old boy,
The Yanks will catch you!" — "Don't you run away!" —
"Dad, here 's the place for you right with your boys."
So to that yelled compulsion back he comes
Upon the road. The men cram to one side
And bellow out their love in ribaldry,
While he, cap off, bent low, rides as for life
Until he wins the front — mops his wet face,
Scarlet with shame and rage, and for an hour
Is fazed as never on the hardest field.
I 've often wondered what you Yankees thought
Of that wild racket sent across the stream.
You must have guessed that fifty thousand men
Came up to our support: you reckoned right,
For when they 'd had their chaffing, every man
Was in his heart a legion for old Jack,
To die a dozen times, if he 'd a mind
To ask that trifle of them.

THE LEADER'S PRAYER

A JOHNNY'S STORY

Again of Jackson: now it 's on a halt
Of days on days: of yonder what it means
That nothing 's doing when all is to do
To round out our campaign. This loitering
Is not much to our minds. The idle men,
Getting obstreperous, are full of pranks
That with another lot tell mutiny. Till a shout
From an observant chap to all the camp, —
A *mot* of order, — "Get a move on, boys,
Old Jack has gone into the brush to pray."
We all know what that means, and mighty quick
Are frying bacon, writing letters home,
Patching sore feet, or conning all our traps
To find what should be jetsam in the sea
With the hard faring. Yes, the rogue was right.
An hour goes by, we see again that cap
Peep from the sassafras, and then old Jack,
Still-faced as priest, slips silent to his tent;
And quick the bugler by it sounds the call
That tells his soul is ready. Forth we swing
The Lord knows where — maybe old Jack told Him,
Maybe he did n't. But what we know right well
Is Yanks are in for it, and that we 'll be
Not quite so many when the job is done.

THE ARTILLERY CHIEF

HOTCHKISS' STORY

He was the chief of our artillery,
Well-trained old soldier, who had learned his trade
At West Point and had practised it right well
In Mexico. Most queer as to his clothes,
Odd happening, the oddest was his cap,
Shaped like a cohorn mortar — pointed front:
Wherever fight was hottest went that cap.
It stuck up like a steeple, so the boys
Guyed at it worshipfully — watched in the smoke
To see it bobbing round, and knew all went
As well as could be while that cap was there.
He cared for it, though careless of all else.
When spattered by a shell, he 'd have it off
And brush it tenderly, press out the dents,
And set it back before he looked to see
What else had happened. So unto the end
"Old Cap" was keeper of our trusted guns,
And none were ever lost. Now came the day
After the finish: Appomattox was
One night behind us, and we were afoot
To hunt our homes. 'T was in the early dawn,
As I was making ready. By my camp
Were parked those precious guns, and through them tramped

Alone, for last inspection, he who 'd been
For those long years their keeper. Slow he went
And sadly: bidding each old piece farewell:
Scanning the gear to see that all was fit
For what of duty 'fore them. When he came
Unto the last, he lifted up the lid
Of limber-box, took off the cohorn cap,
Brushed it right well, then set it tenderly
Within the case, shut cover down, and turned
To take my greeting, looking old and queer
Without his headpiece. "Are you going home?"
I said to him. "No, major: as you see,
I have just left my home."

APPOMATTOX: THE CONFEDERATE'S STORY

HOTCHKISS' STORY

We 'd lounged about all day in ugly mood.
We knew it was the end, and knew as well
We had the Devil in us that would take
That finish to the pit. Marse Lee and Grant
Might fix it as they pleased, but we would go
Into the brush and give the Yanks their fill
Of Mosby's fighting. If we could not have
The land we longed for, we could make it Hell.
We were still twenty thousand — five times that
Were ready for the shindy. We might win
The way to Mexico our dads had trod
And have a fair chance to lick out the French,
Or maybe Greasers. So the talk went on;
All were for mutiny, some for a dash
As soon 't was dark, so we could keep our arms.
We 'd scatter through the woods; there 'd be no risk
That we 'd be nabbed. Some would take their parole,
Then skip off to the south to join the lot
Who soon would join us. We 'd no time to think,
And did n't want to. For all that we 'd had
Of fighting, still our bellies were not full
Of that hard victual. Fact was, we were men

Who had forgot our homes, now mere machines
For killing neighbours — that 's a veteran.
So all was ripe for trouble when there came
Slow riding from the council our Marse Lee.
We 'd seen him bend in those hard years, and yet
We 'd never seen him broken and so old.
At sight of him, our hearts leapt up; we went
On a straight run for him: a fellow got
Right 'fore his horse, and, lifting up his hands,
Cried: "Oh, Marse Lee, tell us what we should do."
He drew rein; in a jiffy all were there,
Caps off and still as mice — with ten-foot space
'Twixt us and him, and then a dead-tight pack
For acres round. He looked on us awhile,
Then said — it seemed a whisper, but all heard —
"Men, I am going home; go you there, too.
We 've fought a man's fight, and we still are men
To do our part by fireside and our folk
We have to help. The terms are generous,
For they 're our friends who have been our brave foes.
You keep your horses; you are free to go
To find your homes or make them. Come with me,
There 's still time for a crop." That warn't just it —
I disremember what he said. He warn't
A cent's worth for a speech. But when he 'd done,
Each chap had shout within him for his home.
A lane was opened in the crowd: he went,
Hat off and silently, and we held still
Till he was out of sight — a-riding home —

And then we jumped to follow, as we 'd used
When he showed us the way. We all forgot
Of Mexico and Mosby: for we saw
Women and children and a house that lay
Out in the broom-sedged fields, and heard the cry
Of a great welcome home. We laid our arms
Right willingly; for now our fingers itched
For hold of ploughtail. — Somewhere, I have read
A lot of learning as to how it was
That all that war was ended with a bang
Like busted shell. You see now how it was:
Marse Lee went riding home, and we went too —
Because we could n't help it.

THE SOLDIER'S WAY

I RODE with Hotchkiss, on an eve in June,
Far down the Shenandoah — all the vale
So lit with summer's hope that end of day
Seemed as the morning, making naught of night
That dwelt not in men's hearts. Scant twenty years
Since 't was the path of war. But twenty years
Is all an age for healing of rent earth:
Babes wax to men and women, widows find
Their rest with long-lost lovers, and the hills
Forget the bugles' echoes, throb of guns,
And the hard agony of men who die
That commonwealth may live. We who were foes,
Now close-knit friends, were nearer in that place
By the dim shadows of forgotten war,
To make trust dearer. As we onward went
Amid the wheat-fields, oft he turned aside
To scan some nook wrapped in the commonplace
Of weeds or corn; then I read in his eyes
Of deeds that men did there, but he was still.
At length we came where Massanuten's wall
Stands like a great ship midway of the vale,
Parting that sea of plenty east and west.
Here a wide field still bore the stamp of hosts —
An old cantonment with the heaps of stone
Where men had built them hearths beside their tents,

Now bramble-covered; save for paths, a wild,
Deep trodden by their feet. Here my good friend
Came from his silence — told me a strange tale
Of his great leader, Jackson, one that tells
What lit that thunderbolt upon the way
To his swift smiting.
"Here we were cantoned,
Some twenty thousand, watching winter out,
Soldered in mud, fighting for chance to keep
Our bellies from collapse and what was left
Of marrow still unfrozen. Bottomless
Was every road, and what of victual came
Wallowed to us afoot 'cross sodden fields,
In cattle that we plucked as hungry wolves
To hides and bones. Another day had worn
Out to the finish in the weary round
That promised nothing but the like to come
From dripping earth and sky. We drowsed like cats
Beside our smudging camp-fires stupidly, —
'Old Jack' the dullest, — till we crept to bed,
To dream that two months more would set us free
To lark it once again. I'd slept an hour;
Woke startled as he shook me — bade me rise;
Stood waiting silent till I was attired,
Then led the way to where a meal was laid;
Without a word sat waiting till I'd done,
Then went with me to door where stood my horse
And waiting orderly. Then the command:
'Ride down the range to cross-roads; there you'll find

The force of Colonel M. Make sure 't is he;
Give him the order "Forward."' Ere I spurred,
I asked what next to do. 'Should I come back
Here for report?' 'Yes, straightway here.'
I fought with night and storm until I bumped
Upon that mounted thousand; worked to front,
Lit match, and found the leader — gave the word;
Backed horse into the hedgerow while it roared
Northward into the dark. 'T was four o'clock
When I won back, to find black emptiness
Here where I 'd left that host. I lit a torch,
Found how the footprints pointed, and rode hard,
But it was noon before I made report
Unto that mystery that looked away
In speculation past the eastern hills."
"And yet he trusted you, we know so well,
You shaped his fields for action with your maps."
"Yes, yes; but we 'd a saying that he prayed
Right carefully to keep his plans well hid
From himself and the Lord. His was a soul
Shaped for contriving silence. All his deeds
Were their own trumpeters. His thunderbolts
Were still as seed in earth until they leapt
Straight to their purposes."

THE HAPPY RELEASE

Again 't is Hotchkiss' story. Of the host
Never a gruesome tale, — such men forget,
Or grave as deep as maybe in their souls, —
This time the last one of the mighty store
That Homer should have shaped. 'T was thus it ran: —
"The war was ended when the sun went down
On Appomattox field. All through that night
We packed our remnants, ready to hie home,
To what was left of it in wreck and woe.
My share was large: a worn-out wagon crammed
With maps I 'd made for Jackson and for Lee;
They were in tatters like our battle-flags,
Muddy and blood-stained, ripped by many a shot;
But they would win me bread in days to come,
When railways, mines, and towns would have to be.
I 'd all Virginia pictured for war's use,
They 'd serve for peace as well; for 't is the earth
We need for business, whate'er it may be —
Earth set forth clear and true. So I hied on,
Full of glad hopes, to Staunton; found there home
Gaunt as the rest; set my lean steeds to plough,
And counted days until the corn would serve
My beggar's state; and found now here, now there,
Chance bit of work where my old maps served well.
So the hard fight was hopeful, till one night

There came a provost-guard, clapped me in chains,
And had me straight away to Washington.
Their captain, a good fellow, made it clear
The charge was weighty ; — it concerned those maps —
Headquarters records — they had run them down
After a six weeks' search ; and so I stood
Traitor and thief for trial, with slim chance
To 'scape the threatened noose. I 'd been a fool
Who 'd never thought it out. The maps seemed mine —
Some made before the war, and all as near
As my own hide to me. Then, while I lay
Chewing that bitter cud of fear and shame
And sorrow for my loved ones, came again
That captain who had nabbed me for a word,
A hard man's word of help. "See here," he said,
"Next week they 'll try you, and your chance ain't worth
A *sou marqué*. Now Lincoln 's dead, you 'll hang,
For that chap in his boots is gone clean mad,
And all the town is with him. You shall have
A try with Grant, maybe he'll help you out.
He 's a hard ticket, but he is a man
Who sees things straight — knows what it is himself
To tumble in a hole and wallow out
As best he can." The plan seemed but a straw,
And yet I clutched at it, with little hope,
For I had seen that sphinx when came the end
At Appomattox, when he met our Lee
With iron face. "How will you manage it?"
"I 'll take you with a guard up to his door

And chuck you in. You 'll have to fight it out.
Maybe I 'll catch it, but I 'll take the risk
To give you chance." So forth unto Grant's place
In the War Office, 'twixt the double files,
Led by the captain, — passport for the guard, —
A knock, a gruff "Come in," and there I stood
Before that bear-trap face and searching eyes
To fight for life.
"Who are you?"
"Hotchkiss, sir,
Sometime of Jackson's staff." And then behold
A saving miracle! "Major, I 'm glad you 've come —
Yes, I 've been looking for you for a month.
Sit down, we 'll have a chat — take a cigar."
"But you don't smoke?" I said. "Never till then,
But then most joyfully." "Major," he said,
"I have a job for you: we need good maps
Made right away of all the battlefields
From Gettysburg to Richmond while they 're fresh.
You know them best, you 've mapped them for your side
Before the fighting: if we 'd had your help,
We 'd saved a year of it. As for your pay,
Call it three hundred monthly, rations in.
Pick out your party. So it is a trade?"
I answered with a nod: I did n't dare
To trust a spoken word. He shook my hand
And went with me to door. There stood the guard,
Saluting when it opened. "What is this?"

"General, these men came with me; they wait here
To take me back to jail. About those maps
I made for Lee and Jackson; like a fool
I took them home with me."
"Oh, that 's all right:
You kept them safe, they 'll help you mightily.
Here, captain, this man 's free; he is engaged
For public service. Find my adjutant,
He 'll fix the papers up. Major, good-by,
Your orders will be ready in an hour."

THE BURIAL PLACE

A HILL-TOP that looks far above the throng
Of brother hills, and into widening vales
Wherein the brooks slip onward to the sea.
A place for castle in old war-worn lands
When might was master: here, the silent hold
Where sleep the dead in earth that looks to sky
For the brave trust in all that dwelleth there.
Here lies the dust of kindred, sire and son,
Mother and daughter. Generations on
Have here won rest and the abiding peace
The summits only know. One tall shaft lifts,
With lesser clustered round it as they group
The children of a house about its hearth
Before the time for sleep. Hereto have come
An old man and a youth in ancient quest
Of place for one more grave, where she shall bide
Who long hath striven faithfully to serve
God's will on earth. And as they silent go
With look to far and near, that she may lie
Where it is fairest, he, the elder, stoops
Beside a gravestone where rude wheels have cut
A deep, now moss-grown scar; and from the earth
He lifts the shreds as though on them were writ
Legend of ancient days, then looks away
To read again the past they tell to him.

'T is not yet two-score years, yet 't is as far
As Trojan legend to the youth who hears
How o'er this earth of peace tramped demon war,
Treading its hills and vales with feet that scorched
Their goodly life out; how of all that dwelt
Out to the rim of sight, peace stayed alone
With those who bided here in God's strong arms,
Unheeding Satan's deeds. Now musingly,
As one who tells himself the half-forgot
That dwells in kindred heart, the ancient told
The story of that time. "See there, my lad,
Upon yon field, there stood our line of war,
And there from out the south came on the foe
For the hard grapple. 'T was a swift-set line,
Ill reckoned for war's work, and place to spare
This hill for what it held. Then to us came
A master of hard deeds, who nothing cared
For graves that are or graves that are to be
When battle's work is on. Swiftly and clear
Rang his commands. But first of all to me,
To go upon the run unto this crest
And place my pieces by this monument,
Sweeping the highway yonder in the vale.
Then in a moment, forth the battery
Swept down the slope before it, broke right through
The walls and fences, then into that gulch
In seeming ruin, yet with gear unharmed
And horses stout enough to pull it out,
With spur and lash to speed them up the slope.

As whirlwind on they went, as whirlwind burst
Into this place of graves. So came that scar
Upon this column that shall bear the mark
Until it goes to dust. 'T is all that tells
Of that mad-storm that went into the deep ;
'T is but the graves that stay."

THE ORPHAN BRIGADE

Eighteen hundred and sixty-one:
There in the echo of Sumter's gun
Marches the host of the Orphan Brigade,
Lit by their banners, in hopes best arrayed.
Five thousand strong, never legion hath borne
Might as this bears it forth in that morn:
Hastings and Cressy, Naseby, Dunbar,
Cowpens and Yorktown, Thousand Years' War,
Is writ on their hearts as onward afar
They shout to the roar of their drums.

Eighteen hundred and sixty-two:
Well have they paid to the earth its due.
Close up, steady! the half are yet here
And all of the might, for the living bear
The dead in their hearts over Shiloh's field —
Rich, O God, is thy harvest's yield!
Where faith swings the sickle, trust binds the sheaves,
To the roll of the surging drums.

Eighteen hundred and sixty-three:
Barring Sherman's march to the sea —
Shorn to a thousand; face to the foe
Back, ever back, but stubborn and slow.
Nineteen hundred wounds they take

In that service of Hell, yet the hills they shake
With the roar of their charge as onward they go
To the roll of their throbbing drums.

Eighteen hundred and sixty-four:
Their banners are tattered, and scarce twelve score,
Battered and wearied and seared and old,
Stay by the staves where the Orphans hold
Firm as a rock when the surges break —
Shield of a land where men die for His sake,
For the sake of the brothers whom they have laid low,
To the roll of their muffled drums.

Eighteen hundred and sixty-five:
The Devil is dead and the Lord is alive,
In the earth that springs where the heroes sleep,
And in love new born where the stricken weep.
That legion hath marched past the setting of sun:
Beaten? nay, victors: the realms they have won
Are the hearts of men who forever shall hear
The throb of their far-off drums.

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From
Old
Fields

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POEMS
OF THE
CIVIL WAR

◆

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